A SHORT HISTORY OF MANIPUR

R.K JHALAJIT SINGH

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	Dr Surya Kanta Bhuyan Anglo-Assamese Relations
EFBI	A C Banerjee Eastern Frontier of British India
EMNH MEMNH	Sir James Johnstone My Exp... Manipur And Naga Hills
HBLL	Dinesh Chandra Sen History ... Language And Literature
HEAA	Sir Robert Reid History of Front... Bordering On Assam.
HMI ...	R K Jhalajit Singh A History of Manipuri Literature Vol I
NEFB ...	Alexander Mackenzie Northeastern Frontier of Bengal
NI	Ningthourol Lambuba, a chronicle in difficult Manipuri A most reliable text was in the manuscript library of Moirangthem Chandra Singh Sahitya Ratna
PK	Panthoibi Khongoom, a book narrating the story of Panthoibi a goddess
RC	Royal Chronicle (Published by the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad Ist. Edn) Originally kept by successive generations of chroniclers at the Royal College of Pundits in the compound of the palace
RNEFI	Richard Boileau Pemberton Report On The Northeast Frontier of India Published 1835
SAM	Dr Robert Brown Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (Edinburgh), British Political Agent in Manipur Statistical Account of Manipur Published 1874.

A correction. On page 352 please replace 'heavily' by 'largely' at 3rd line from bottom

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book was out of print for a long time. I offer a sincere and unqualified apology to scholars, students and the reading public for the great inconvenience caused to them by the inavailability of the book in the market.

The history of Manipur is a piece in the mosaic of Indian history In the book, the history of Manipur is remolded as an integral part of Indian history. The history of mankind is kept in view as the backdrop. The history of Manipur is presented here against this backdrop

From the grammar of the Manipuri language and the etymology of a good many Manipuri words, we are sure that wave after wave of Prakrit and Pali speaking peoples settled in the Manipur Valley. They married local Mongoloid women Fusion of races and cultures began. Pending further evidence, we place the first immigration of the Indo-Aryan-speaking peoples about the later phase of the Maurya Empire.

There is no such a thing as a pure race now. The branches of mankind are not like the branches of a tree which permanently remain separate. They are, so to speak, branches of the same river They unite with one another again at the first opportunity.

The bulk of the book is from Manipuri sources viz. the Royal Chronicle, another chronicle called *Ningthourol Lambuba*, books on specific episodes like *Takshen Ngamba*, *Jila Durbar etc.* I have of course relied on official publications in English -Administration Reports of the Manipur Agency, Manipur Administration Reports etc. I have consulted with great benefit the memoirs of Sir James Johnstone and Mrs Ethel C. Grimwood I am indebted to the learned writers on the history of Burma, history of Assam and the history of the Bengali language and literature. I am indebted to my friend Prof. N Tombi Singh who was an M.P. while the book was writing. By staying at his official residence it was possible to study the illuminating documents in the National Archives.

The Manipuris follow Shakabda. They use the *amanta* mode of reckoning. Their year is luni-solar. They use the 7-day week — an artificial period of time which has no direct relation to astronomical phenomena. Dates are recorded in the Royal Chronicle in Shakabda giving the day of the Manipuri month. From 1666 onwards, the day of the week is also mentioned. In this book, we therefore very often mention the Manipuri months with roughly corresponding English months in parentheses. It is possible to find out exact corresponding dates in the Gregorian calendar. From the next edition, we hope to give, in parentheses, exact corresponding English dates of all major events in Manipur from 1752 onwards — the year of reformation of the English calendar.

The year of the simultaneous invasion by Burma and Tripura, though not mentioned in *Takshen Ngamba*, is 1724.

My friend Principal Jyotirmoy Roy in his *History of Manipur* treats the period upto the end of the 7th century as legendary/puranic period and the period from the 8th century to the end of the 17th as unaccounted period. I treat both in the historical period.

We are thankful to the staffs of the State Central Library, Imphal and the Manipur State Archives Imphal for the promptness with which they found out books and documents I required.

The management and the staff of the J.M. Printing Works gave me full co-operation in trying to bring out, free from misprints, this book. They gave me more service and courtesy than a press usually gives. Without their advice and willing co-operation, I would not be able to bring out this book with this standard.

The Department of Art and Culture, the Government of Manipur, gave a timely publication grant of Rs 3,000/-, which met a part of the cost of paper. I accepted it with thanks.

Mera Purnima
11 October, 1992

R.K. JHALAJIT SINGH

A Short History of Manipur

CHAPTER—I

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Manipur lies on the eastern frontier of India. The Manipur of today is bounded on the north by a series of hills called Nagaland ; on the north-east, east and south by Burma ; on the south-west by Mizoram ; on the west and north-west by the present State of Assam It may be mentioned that Cachar was not a part of Assam until its annexation by the British. The boundary of Manipur is partly the international boundary between India and Burma. The Manipur of today lies between 23°50'N and 25°30'N Latitude and 93°10'E and 94°30'E Longitude

The Valley and the hills

Manipur consists of a central valley called the Manipur Valley and ranges of hills surrounding it on all sides The hills cover about 7,850 square miles and the valley is about 750 square miles. What we generally call the valley is in reality a plateau ; its height above the sea-level varies at different points but may be taken to be about 2,600 feet. The elevation at the Manipur State Assembly is about 2,572 ft. above the sea-level The elevation has a great influence on the climate. The ranges of hills are higher on the north and gradually diminish in height as they reach the southern part of Manipur. The Valley itself slopes down gradually towards the south That is why all important rivers of Manipur flow from the north to the south and this is also the reason why all lakes are situated in the southern part of the valley.

The hills and mountains of Manipur are offshoots from the Himalayas. The Himalayas, forming the northern boundary of India, come to the north-eastern extremity of Assam. From here, ranges of hills emerge from the Himalayas and proceeding in the south-westerly direction and then in the southerly direction, form the boundary walls of India separating this country from Burma. These ranges of hills while proceeding from the Himalayas diverge just to the north of Manipur : but converge again just to the south, thus enclosing the Valley of Manipur. For the sake of completeness of description, we may add that the ranges of hills continue beyond the southern boundary of Manipur. Proceeding southwards as the Mizo Hills and then as the Arakan Yomas, they finally meet the Bay of Bengal in Burma.

Viewed from the top of a hill, the Manipur Valley looks like a circular wooded valley surrounded on all sides by ranges of hills, strongly reminding one of a huge trough.

Hill routes

The hills between the Surma Valley and the Manipur Valley do not completely seal off the latter from the rest of India. From before the beginning of the Christian era, there were some routes through these hills connecting the Manipur Valley and the Surma Valley. There were at least three routes connecting the two valleys. The northernmost of them connected Banskandi near Silchar with the place now called Jaipur in the Manipur Valley. The middle one connected Banskandi with Bishnupur in the Manipur Valley. The southern most route connected the western bend of the Barak River with Torbung, a village in the south-western part of the Manipur Valley.

There were one or two routes connecting the Brahmaputra Valley with the Manipur Valley. But they were more difficult. Likewise, there were a number of routes connecting the Manipur Valley with what is now called Upper Burma.

People from the rest of India could go to the Manipur Valley by one of the routes. After resting there as long as they liked, they could reach Upper Burma by one of the routes.

Once they reached Upper Burma, they could go to Lower Burma or China.

From about the third century B.C., these routes were used by colonisers, traders, invaders and pilgrims. Mr.D.G.E. Hall mentions in his *History of South-east Asia* a road connecting Lower Burma with India[1].

Soil and climate

The soil of Manipur is fertile. Captain Pemberton writing in the third decade of the nineteenth century said "......... .... the fertility of the soil is so great that the crops generally prove most abundant"[2]. Colonel McCulloch writing some years later, said with some astonishment "Not a particle of manure is placed on the ground, and yet year after year good crops are raised from the same spot"[3]. The rainfall from the monsoon is plenty. The rich soil, the plentiful rainfall and the sufficient sunshine combined to give rich crops. The main cereal was, as it is now, rice. Various kinds of vegetables grew. Food was very cheap Even in the fourth decade of the 20th century, paddy sold at 2 to 3 maunds a rupee[4].

The Tropic of Cancer lies a little to the south of the southern boundary of Manipur. If it were only for the latitudes, the climate of Manipur would be hot; but there is the factor of altitude also Since the Valley is about 2,600 feet above the sea-level, the climate is cool. Imphal and Silchar are very nearly on the same latitude. The climate of Imphal is cool. That of Silchar is hot The hills are still higher and therefore colder than the Valley. But the climate is hot in Jiribam, the western-most part of Manipur and at Moreh, in the south-eastern part of Manipur. Because Jiribam is only about 131 ft. above the sea-level. It is the easternmost fringe of the Indo-Gangetic valley. Likewise Moreh is at the western fringe of the Kabaw Valley.

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1. p. 121
2. RNEFI
3. Quoted by Mr. T.C. Hodson in *The Meitheis* p. 41
4. Author's findings.

The Manipur Valley is much cooler than the neighbouring Surma and the Brahmaputra valleys; but warmer than hill-towns like Shillong and Darjeeling. An Englishman, Sir James Johnstone, wrote in the 19th century ' .... for eight months in the year, it (the climate of the Manipur Valley) is most enjoyable" [5]. This gives us a rough idea of what a man from a cold country like England would feel in the Valley of Manipur.

Sir James Johnstone does not mention what the four months which are not enjoyable are. He probably means May, June, July and August. May is the hottest month. In June, July and August, there is monsoon downpour. In all these four months, the Valley is infested with mosquitoes. But even in May, the climate is cooler than that of the Gangetic-Brahmaputra Valley in May.

The bountiful crops and the pleasant climate helped the people rise in the rungs of culture. They made their mark in literature, music and dance, sports and warfare. Their achievements in these fields will be noticed in the following pages.

A part of India

Manipur has always been a part of India. It is the eastern frontier of India. Culturally, as we shall see in the following pages, from about 300 B.C. upto the present time it has been in close contact with the rest of the country, although in the 12th, 13th and the 14th centuries, the cultural link between Manipur and the rest of the country somewhat slackened. From the 15th century onwards, the close cultural ties with the rest of the country were resumed.

Manipur was known to the rest of India from ancient times. Panini, who lived in the 5th or the 4th century B.C., mentions in his famous grammar a good number of places in India. Among the names so mentioned is Surmasa, which we identify as the valley of the Surma. The valley of the Surma is, as it were, the western gate of Manipur. The Surma and the Barak

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5. EMNH p. 79

are one and the same river. The lower portion is called the Surma and the upper portion is called the Barak. This river rises in the hills of northern Manipur. The valley of the Surma or the Barak comes right upto the western fringe of Manipur. Between Sylhet and the western fringe of Manipur, there is no impediment such as hills, forests, big rivers or wide deserts. Once the Indo-Aryans reached Sylhet, they reached the western border of Manipur in a matter of decades. Once they reached there, it was easy for them to reach the Manipur Valley, for this valley was on an international route connecting the Gangetic Valley with Burma and beyond. That is why we say that Manipur was known to the rest of India. In the epic the Mahabharata, there is reference to Manipur in at least four different places.

The first reference to Manipur is in Adi Parva on the occasion of Arjuna going from Hiranyavindu to see the eastern region. After seeing the Mahendra mountains, he proceeded slowly along the coast, reached Manipur and married Chitrangada, the princess of that kingdom. She was of the complexion of a *madhuka* flower i.e. *mahua* flower. A *mahuā* flower is of golden colour. Chitrangada was of golden complexion. This suggests that she might be of Mongoloid descent. The second reference is in Ashwamedha Parva in connection with the roaming of the sacrificial horse guarded by Arjuna and the eventual fight between him and his son Babhruvahana, the king of Manipur. After the battle, the horse, having roamed over the 'whole earth bounded by the ocean', turned his face towards Hastinapura and the return journey began. Arjuna as before followed the horse. On the return journey, the horse came to Rajagriha, the capital city Magadha.

What does the above account prove ? What is the meaning of 'the earth bounded by the ocean' ? Evidently the horse did not roam over the whole earth as it is known to us today. He simply roamed all over India as known to the Indo-Aryans of those days. So, 'the earth bounded by the ocean' simply

means India. That this is the meaning of 'the earth bounded by the ocean' is clear from many other incidents in the Mahabharata. Let us take one instance. After the horse-sacrifice, Yudhisthira gave 'the whole earth' to Vyasa as largesse *(dakshina)*. Evidently, Yudhisthira could not give those areas now covered by say, South America, Africa or New Zealand. By 'the whole earth', he meant India as known to him. He could give this as it was already traversed by the horse and conquered by Arjuna. By referring to the sacrificial horse after reaching Manipur as 'having roamed over the whole earth bounded by the ocean', the author of the epic simply means that on reaching Manipur, the horse had come to the frontier of India That this frontier was the eastern frontier will be clear from the next incident narrated in the epic. While returning to Hastinapura (near modern Delhi) from Manipura, the horse passed through Rajagriha (modern Rajgir near Patna) This can happen if, and only if, Manipura lies to the east of Patna. In plain language, Manipura was on the eastern frontier of India. The Manipur * of to day is the Manipura of the Mahabharata.

Look at a physical map of Asia It will be seen that India before the British conquest was marked out from the rest of Asia by Nature by hills and mountains and the seas. On the north are the Himalayas. At the western extremity of the Himalayas, ranges of hills emerge from them and reach the Arabian Sea or the Western Sea as the ancient Indians called it. From the eastern extremity of the Himalayas also, ranges of hills emerge and reach the Bay of Bengal or the Eastern Sea as the ancient Indians called it. So the Western Sea, the western arm of the Himalayas, the Himalayas, the eastern arm of the Himalayas and the Eastern Sea formed, broadly speaking, the boundary of India in ancient and medieval times. Manipur lies within this India, on its eastern frontier.

* English educated people and people influenced by Hindi, pronounce it as Manipur. Less sophisticated people whether young or old still pronounce it as Manipura, which is the correct Manipuri pronunciation.

The third reference to Manipur in the Mahabharata is also in Ashwamedha Parva but in a later part. Arjuna sent a message to Krishna to inform Yudhishthira that Babhruvahana, king of Manipur, would attend the horse sacrifice and to request Yudhishthira to receive Babhruvahana with honour. Krishna did accordingly. Babhruvahana arrived in Hastinapura with Chitrangada and Ulupi and they were received with honour and affection. After the horse-sacrifice, in the great assemblage of kings from all over India, Yudhishthira summoned Babhruvahana first of all, gave generous gifts and permitted him to return to his kingdom.

The fourth reference is in Mahaprasthanika Parva. The Five Brothers and Draupadi left the capital to leave India for good and reach heaven in flesh and blood. They were followed by a dog only. Chitrangada returned to Manipura city.

All the incidents in the Mahabharata are not historical. They are mixed with a lot of fiction. Babhruvahana and Chitrangada might or might not be historical persons. Here we are taking the Mahabharata as literature. It has been aptly said that literature is the mirror of the society. The society is reflected in the literature it produces. What is reflected in this mirror which took the present shape about the 4th century A.D. ? It reflects the fundamental unity of India.

Shorn of its legends and supernatural beings, the Mahabharata is strikingly modern. It says that the kings from all over India were classified according to rank. It says that Yudhishtira, in full possession of his senses, treated the rulers according to their rank *inter se* so that there might not be any room for dissatisfaction. The great assemblage of Indian kings from all parts of India in the hall of Yudhishthira strongly reminds us of a durbar of Indian Princes in New Delhi held by the King Emperor during British Paramountcy. Manipura inspite of its great distance from Indraprastha or Hastinapura (near Delhi) figures rather conspicuously in the Mahabharata.

India being a big country was divided into a large number of independent kingdoms. Manipur was one of them. At intervals big empires like the Maurya Empire,the Gupta Empire and the Mughal Empire rose and fell. None of these empires could cover the whole of India. Manipur was outside the Maurya, the Gupta and the Mughal empires.

Never completely isolated

Ranges of hills lie between the Surma Valley and the Manipur Valley. But they never cut off the Manipur Valley from the rest of India.

Before 1965, most scholars thought that the history of Manipur prior to the 18th century could not be traced. It was a hackneyed saying at that time that the history of Manipur before the 18th century was lost in antiquity. The picture of pre-18th century Manipur projected in those days was a picture of a mountainous place hermetically sealed off from the rest of India. It was believed at that time that no invasion, no influence on religion, language, literature or other forms of culture came from the rest of India prior to the 18th century. In the following pages we shall see how incorrect these ideas are.

It is true that no empire in India other than the British Empire could cover Manipur. This was mainly on account of its distance and the hills which the Manipuris utilised for defence. This circumstance had its effect on the history. But the effect is not as great as it was pictured to be. The history of Manipur is a piece in the mosaic of Indian history and must be viewed against the background of Indian history.

Effect of Geography

What is the effect of Geography on the history of Manipur ? Its location on the eastern frontier, and the hills of Manipur contributed much to the maintenance of independence of Manipur and therefore to the course of its history, A dynasty was founded in 33 A.D It ruled Manipur up to April 1891.

A dynasty ruling a place for almost 2,000 years is something unique in the history of India. The location of Manipur and its physical features helped much in making it possible. On the other hand, the location made the people of Manipur live in close contact with the peoples of Burma.

The monsoon downpour and the topography of the Manipur Valley exposed the people to deadly waterborne diseases. This checked the growth of the Manipuri-speaking population. The small population was a handicap in warfare, pursuit of agriculture and industry, the growth of literature and the spread of the Manipuri language.

The location of Manipur on the route connecting the Gangetic valley with the Burma-China border and Upper Burma had a great effect on the formation of the Manipuri-speaking people, the formation of their language, their economy and outlook and therefore, on the history of Manipur.

CHAPTER—II

THE PEOPLE

For the purpose of this book, the people of Manipur may be broadly classified under three main groups: (i) The Manipuri-speaking people or the Miteis, (ii) the hill people and (iii) the Manipuri Muslims. When the British talked of the Manipuris or the Munniporis, they meant the Miteis. They inhabit the thickly populated central valley of about 750 square miles and the plain portion of the Jiribam Sub-Division in the westernmost part of Manipur. The hill people consist of many groups and sub-groups and inhabit the hills of Manipur. The Manipuri Muslims inhabit fertile tracts of land on the banks of the Imphal River and the Irin River. The Manipuri Brahmins come under the classification the Miteis.

The Manipuris : General appearance

The Manipuris (the Miteis) are the result of a great mixture of blood. But this is no discredit to them. There is no such thing as a pure race now. Only a species of Man called the *Homo sapiens* exists in the world now. It has many branches ; but whenever these branches meet they tend to unite. They are like the branches of a river. Branches of a tree, once they separate, never unite again ; but branches of a river always unite whenever they get a chance to meet one another.

Broadly speaking, the features of the Manipuri (Miteis) are Mongoloid. The moustache and the beard are rather thin and the hair on the chest is either absent or scanty. The oblique

eye is extremely rare. The nose is, in most cases, little and not very prominent. The hair is usually long, black and straight. Wavy hair is also occasionally met with. Brunets are as common as blonds. The Manipuris are not a yellow people like the Chinese, the Shans or the Burmese. We find among them brown skin, black skin and sometimes even white skin. The cheekbone is slightly prominent. Regarding stature and build, there can be no general remark ; because they are very various.

Due to sedentary habits and poorer food, the stature of the Manipuris deteriorated in the early half of the twentieth century ; but after the Second World War, there has been some improvement. During most of the period covered in this book, they were more stalwart than at present. They were a hardy eople who made fine warriors.

If the general feature is Mongoloid, there are some traces of Aryan feature also. Dr.R. Brown said "Although the general facial characteristics of the Munniporie (Manipuri) are of the Mongolian type. there is great diversity of feature among them, some of them showing a regularity approaching the Aryan type. Among both men and women the stature is very various, differing about as much as is found among the Europeans" [1]. In Dun's *Gazeteer of Manipur,* the footnote says "There can be no reasonable doubt that a great Aryan wave of very pure blood passed through Manipur into Burma in prehistoric times. I see traces of this in the finely cut features seen now and then among the Manipuris" [2]. Sir James Johnstone in his *My Experiences in Manipur and Naga Hills* says "In the days when the Indian branch of the Aryan race was still in its progressive and colonising stage, this district (Manipur) was repeatedly passed over by one wave after another of invaders intent on penetrating into the remotest part of Burma" [3].

India was a great prosperous country. So was China. A famous route connecting the Indo-Gangetic valley with the Burma-China border passed through the Manipur Valley. There

1. SAM. 2.p.6. 3.p.80.

were ramifications of this route Sir A Phayre observes in his History of Burma "The route by which Kshatriya princes arrived (in Burma) is indicated in the tradition as being through Manipur which lies within the basin of the Irrawady"[4].

Manipur does not lie wholly in the basin of the Irrawady. A part lies in that basin Another part lies in the basin of the Surma which ultimately falls into the Padma in Bangla Desh But the statement of Phayre is substancially true.

Hillmen

In this category, we include the Tangkhuls, the Maos, the Marams, the Kabuis, the Kukis, the Marings and other peoples inhabiting hills of Manipur.

The Tangkhuls are tall, fair-complexioned and usually thin. The nose is straight and slightly pointed, although it cannot be said to be prominent They usually have finely cut features. They inhabit the hills in the north-eastern part of Manipur

The Maos are brown-skinned and usually shorter than the Tangkhuls They occupy the hills to the extreme north of Manipur The Marams are like the Maos ; but live to the south of them in the ranges of hills known as the Maram Hills.

The Kabuis live in the hills from Tamenglong and Aimol to Khoubum Valley Some of them live in some parts of the Manipur Valley including the capital city Imphal. They are usually short-statured and of light build.

The above-mentioned hill peoples have long been associated with plainsmen usually called the Manipuris. In the first century A.D., some plainsmen being driven out from the Valley by the Ningthoujas (see *post*) fled to the hills and merged among the Tangkhuls.

Racially different from the above peoples, are the Kukis. There are many groups and sub-groups among them. They live in the hills of Manipur and Burma In Manipur, they

4. p. 3.

usually occupy the south-western hills. Most of the Kukis are new arrivals in Manipur. Even as late as the closing decades of the nineteenth century, hordes of Kukis arrived in Manipur and were allowed to settle here by the Maharajah.

The Marings live on the Manipur side of the present Indo-Burma border. They are usually dark skinned. Both men and women among them keep long hair. Men tie their hair in a knot in front near the fore-head. Women do it on the back. Most of them migrated from Mangsa in the Kabaw Valley[5], According to them, after their migration from the Kabaw Valley, they lived for some time in Imphal at Moirangkhom[6] (quite near the Manipur Secretariat). From there, they migrated to their present place[7]. Some of the Marings migrated from Angoching near the Kabaw Valley[8].

The Manipuri Muslims

There are Muslims also. In order to distinguish them from the Bengali Muslims, the Assamese Muslims etc., they are called the Manipuri Muslims. They began to settle here in 1606. They speak the Manipuri language.

The Modern Manipuri word for Muslim is *Pangal*. This is derived from the word *Bangal*, meaning men of East Bengal. The earliest Muslim settlers came from East Bengal and were consequently called the Bangals, meaning the Bengalees of East Bengal. The word *Bangal* soon corrupted into *Pangal*; because most Manipuris in the 17th century pronounced *b* as *p*. In medieval times, any man from East Bengal, irrespective of his religion, was called Pangal.

There are Pathans and Moghuls among the Manipuri Muslims.

Race movements

The hills which seperate India from Burma are not as high as the Himalayas and they are far less inaccessible. There are a number of well-known routes accross them,. From pre-historic

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5 to 8. C. Gimson : Some Notes on Maring Nagas of Manipur pp. 284–285.

times upto about 1652, Mongoloid peoples from Upper Burma used to come to the Manipur Valley sometimes in small batches and sometimes in bigger ones. We know of one such movement in some detail. In this case, the Mongoloid people came in a horde about 33 A. D. under the leadership of a man named Poireiton by the Manipuris. His original name in his native place was different. The reason of migration of the Mongoloid peoples in pre-historic and early historic times was just the nomadic habit of moving from place to place in search of food and new land for settlement.

In the 15th century, there was an influx of Shans into the Manipur Valley from Upper Burma. They were Hinduised in time and the culture of Manipur continued to be Indian. The ethnic Burmese had enough land in the wide Irrawady valley and the neighbouring areas. No ethnic Burmese, therefore, migrated to Manipur. The Manipuris and the Burmese are not related by blood. Regarding the Chinese, altogether about nine Chinese immigrated into the Manipur Valley from the earliest times upto about 1891 They came on different occasions and not in one batch. All immigration into Manipur from the east stopped abruptly after the death of a Manipuri king in 1652.

People from the Gangetic valley migrated into the Manipur Valley in batches like waves following waves. They came for trade, colonisation. and propagation of Budhism and Hinduism.

Now let us take up the Immigration of Poireiton and the immigrations from the Gangetic valley.

Immigration of Poireiton

Poireiton and his horde belonged to a Mongoloid race. Polyandry and levirate marriage were in vogue among them. His elder brother had two wives, The elder of the two had oblique eyes and her bosom was not well-developed. These features suggest that she was probably a Chinese. Poireiton himself had no wife. His elder brother told him to migrate. He replied that he had no wife. His brother then bade his elder wife migrate with Poireiton. She replied that the people of

the country they would be migrating to would laugh at her for her bodily features mentioned above. This shows that women of the country they would be migrating to had no bodily features like hers. He then bade his younger wife migrate with Poireiton. She agreed. Evidently, she was free from bodily features of her co-wife.

The immigrants carried a tray of earth filled with husks which burnt constantly. They carried the fire wherever they went. They were armed with axes, bows and arrows. There were sword-makers and spear-makers also in the horde ; but swords and spears are not specifically mentioned among the weapons they carried Poreiton carried an iron walking-stick with him The horde carried 100 items which could be eaten raw and 100 items which one had to eat after cooking. Among the things they brought was a kind of sweet-smelling rice Future generations named it after the leader of the immigrants. It is now called *chahou poireiton.*

They brought neat with them. But the horse is nowhere mentioned. The wheeled cart is not mentioned either. We believe that they did not know how to use the horse. They had the technology to make swords and spears , but probably could not make them in bulk for want of raw materials. They ate meat but there is no evidence of their taking fish.

Poireiton continued to call his brother's wife sister-in-law ; but he had a number of children by her This piece of evidence shows the nature of the society of the horde. Poireiton's aim was to search for men free from disease and death. It was in search of this figment of the mind that he migrated from somewhere in Upper Burma and roamed over a wide area covering Upper Burma and parts of Manipur. He visited the hill areas inhabited by the Marings, the Moyons, the Anals and the Tangkhuls. He spent one night in a Tangkhul village.

His horde comprised men, women and children. They suffered much during the long years of travel. Disease attacked them and some of them including a son of Poireiton died.

At last, he was thoroughly disillusioned. He found no man free from disease or death. He cried in anguish "For a useless figment, my soles are torn and my iron walking-stick is worn out". He settled down in Manipur after years of roaming.

Effect of Poireiton's immigration

Poireiton was decidedly an important person. It was widely though erroneously, believed that he was the first man to bring fire to Manipur. People who had settled in the Manipur Valley before him used fire better than he. Still the belief persisted. It was also believed that the second, third, fourth, sixth and the seventh months of the Manipuri calendar were named after his activities. But there was one domain where his migration could not bring any change. That was the domain of language.

What language did Poireiton and his horde speak ? They spoke a Sino-Tibetan language, probably Tibeto-Burman.

Immigration of Indo-Aryans

The Indo-Aryans entered India by coming along the course of the River Kabul. After settling in the Punjab, they spread to other parts of India following a few definite lines of expansion. One line of expansion was towards the south along the course of the River Indus. Another, and perhaps more vigorous, line of expansion was along the River Ganga. The Indo-Aryans reached and settled in Mithila about the 7th century B.C. After settling in Mithila, the Indo-Aryans pushed further east along the course of the Ganga,

In the 5th century B.C., the delta of the Ganga was very small. It is because of the huge amounts of silt brought down by the Ganga and the Brahmaputra every year that the delta grew in size year after year, century after century during the last 2,500 years and attained the present size. At present the southernmost islands in the Gangetic delta extend to the south almost upto 21°30'N. In the 5th century B.C., what is now called Tamluk (22°18'N) latitude was of course on the coast. The Bay of Bengal or Purva Samudra as it was called, extended on the

north far beyond Tamluk. On the eastern side of the delta also, there was a big inlet of the sea advancing far beyond the Tropic of Cancer. The Surma, therefore, in the 5th century B.C., flowed into the Purva Samudra.

After following the course of the Ganga, the Indo-Aryans proceeded towards the east to avoid the inhabitable coast and came accross the Surma. They followed up the course of the Surma and easily reached the areas now called the Surma valley. The Indo-Aryans in those days called these areas Surmasa Now, *asa* is Vedic Sanskrit meaning proximity. Surmasa therefore means 'the land near the Surma'. That is why we identify Surmasa as the Surma valley, or to be more precise, the district of Sylhet now in Bangla Desh.

The Surma rises in the hills of Manipur. But this river in its upper course is called the Barak. The Barak flows in a southerly direction in Manipur. At the south-western corner of Manipur, it makes a hairpin bend and flows towards the north for some distance making the boundary between Manipur and the Cachar district of Assam It then makes a western bend and flows towards the west in the district of Cachar still under the name Barak until it reaches a place called Bhanga where it breaks up into two streams The northern stream is called the Surma and the southern, the Kushiyara. After flowing some distance, the Surma and the Kushiyara unite again and the united stream leaves the district of Sylhet under the name Surma.

When did the Indo-Aryans reach Surmasa or the modern district of Sylhet ? As said above, Surmasa was known to Panini as it is mentioned in his famous grammar Now, Panini lived in north-western India and wrote his grammar about 400 B.C It therefore follows that the Aryan expansion to eastern India reached Sylhet in the 5th century B.C. After reaching what is now called the district of Sylhet, the Indo-Aryans proceeded further towards the east along the course of the Surma or Barak The terrain from Sylhet to the

township of Jiribam on the western border of Manipur is plain. Jiribam is about 131 ft. above the sea-level. Guwahati in the Brahmaputra valley is about 130 ft. above the sea-level. The Indo-Aryans therefore found no difficulty in reaching the place now called Jiribam.

Jiribam was on the international highway connecting the Gangetic valley with Upper Burma and the Burma-China border. The Indo-Aryans were still in the progressive colonising stage. They therefore proceeded further along the international highway and reached the Manipur Valley.

The Indo-Aryans settled in the Manipur Valley; but some of them proceeded further towards Upper Burma and the Burma-China border for trade, propagation of religion and in search of fortune. We may bear in mind that in the extensive expansion of the Indo-Aryans, they followed the courses of rivers as their guide right from the time when they migrated to India following the course of the River Kabul. Following the course of a river was the safest guide in those days before the compass and the map. In proceeding to the Burma-China border from the Manipur Valley also, they followed the same practice. They followed the course of a particular river in Manipur. The river also served them to some extent in carrying merchandise as it was navigable to some distance for small boats. They simply referred to the river as *irinang*. In Vedic Sanskrit, *irinang* means a small river. The particular river we are discussing here, though big by the standard of Manipur, is a small river to any one who has seen the Ganga, the Brahmaputra or even the Surma in its lower course. As the Indo-Aryans constantly referred to the particular river as *irinang*, meaning the river, Irinang became the name of the river. It became a proper noun. To this day, the river is called the Irin, Anglicised as the Iril by officers of the East India Company in the 19th century.

There were settlements of the Indo-Aryans on the banks of the Irin. One such settlement was at Sekta, a village some

10 miles to the north-east of Imphal. In Sanskrit, *sikata* has two meanings: It may mean sand or sandy soil. The soil of Sekta is sandy in our time; but in the third century B.C. when the Indo-Aryans arrived in the Manipur Valley, Sekta might be just an expanse of sand on the bank of the Irin.

In Manipuri, *sekta* means sand. It is derived from Sanskrit *sikata* (sand). But the Sanskrit word *sikata* became *sikaya* (or its variant *sigaya*) in Prakrit. From *sikaya* or *sigaya*, we cannot derive *sekta*. Sanskrit *sikata* remained as *sikata* in Pali meaning sand or gravel. Manipuri *sekta* therefore is derived from Sanskrit *sikata* through Pali. The Indo-Aryans who settled at Sekta and its immediate neighbourhood spoke, in all probability, Pali.

The Indo-Aryans who settled in the Manipur Valley lived mostly in villages. The village, in the language of the new settlers, was called *gam* which became * *gun* and then *khun*, the present Manipuri word for the village. But some of the Indo-Aryans lived in the town. There were only a few towns in the Valley. The Indo-Aryan immigrants called a town *pur* from which the archaic Manipuri word *pung* (town) is derived.

Formation of the Manipuri-speaking people

Manipur situated on the gateway of the plain of North India to Upper Burma was, because of its strategic location, a meeting-ground of Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid races, cultures and languages. The different races settled together and some of the races fused together.

The Indo-Aryan traders, invaders and missionaries came mostly without womenfolk. Naturally, they married local Mongoloid women. This was the beginning of fusion. Further batches of Indo-Aryan immigrants kept on arriving at intervals. Those who came without womenfolk likewise married local Mongoloid women. And so on. The process of miscegenation continued decade after decade, century after century. As a result of the fusion of Indo-Aryans and Mongoloid peoples,

he nucleus of the Manipuri-speaking people of today was ormed. We believe that the nucleus was formed in the first ew centuries of the Christian era.

Even after the formation of this nucleus, there were fresh arrivals from the east and the west. Some of them merged in the local population. The Manipuri-speaking people are divided into seven clans. It appears that this division was completed in the first few centuries of the Christian era. What about the new arrivals ? The new arrivals too were grouped under the seven clans. According to tradition, the assignment of clans to the new immigrants from the east and the west was in the reign of Naophangba (see Chapter V *post*) in the 5th century A.D.

After the reign of Naophangba, there were some arrivals from the Kabaw Valley in the reigns of Naothingkhong (7th century) and Khumomba (second half of the 13th century). In the reign of Ningthoukhomba (1432-1467) there was an influx of Shans. Some of the fresh immigrants became Manipuris They too were absorbed in one or other of the seven clans. There was litte immigration from the east after the reign of Khagemba (1597-1652).

Immigration from other parts of India continued right upto 1891. In historical times, the earliest recorded contact with the Bengalis is in the turn of the 12th century. There was a Bengali village in the western part of the Manipur Valley in the beginning of that century. Fresh arrivals of Brahmins mainly via Bengal started in the early half of the 15th century. The Lairikyengbams started coming in the 15th century. So did the Kshetrimayums in the 16th century. The arrivals of the Brahmins, the Lairikyengbams and the Kṣhetrimayums will be noticed in their proper places.

The Manipuris maintained a class of reliable books which we may call Immigration Books. The coming of people from the east is recorded in a book entitled *Nongpok Haram*. A book *Mayang Tekhaolon* purports to give an account of

immigration from Assam and other parts of eastern India. But there was not much immigration from Assam. The book mentions the case of a Brahmin family which merged in a certain non-Brahmin Manipuri family. The immigration of Brahmins is recorded in a book called *Bamon Khunthok (Bamon* Brahmin ; *Khunthok* immigration). The immigration of the Lairikyengbams is recorded in *Lairikyengbam Lon* (a Study of the Lairikyengbams). That of the Kshetrimayums is recorded in *Khetri Lon* (a Study of the Khetris)

Mongoloid blood is more prominent than Aryan blood in the formation of the Manipuris In considering this matter, we have to bear in mind the distance of Manipur from the Punjab, proximity of Manipur to Burma and the comparative accessibility of the hills separating India from Burma. The Manipur Valley was not merely a meeting-ground of races. It was to some extent a melting-pot *

One thing may be said in favour of the immigrants whether from the west or the east. They became good Manipuris

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* The Civil Hospital, Imphal maintained records of the blood groups of the patients requiring blood transfusion and the prospective donors The present author was permitted by the Government of Manipur to see the records and publish his findings The author examined the blood groups of 100 Hindu Manipuri residents of Imphal who were not Brahmins, Kshetrimayums or Lairikyengbams. He found the frequency of different blood groups as follows : A—34%, B—25% ; AB—12% ; O—29%.

For a people living on the eastern frontier of India, the frequency of A among the Manipuris is not low nor is that of B high. O is characteristic of long isolated communities. Its frequency is not high among the Manipuris showing thereby that the Manipuris were not an isolated community.

For frequency of blood groups among peoples in neighbouring countries of India, see Report on the Census of India 1931 Vol I-Part 1 p.451.

For frequency among white Europeans see Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol 3 p.741.

In course of time, they forgot their mother-tongues whether Gujarati, Oriya, Bengali, Hindi or Shan languages and spoke Manipuri as their mother-tongue. In patriotism, they were as good as those who settled before them. The immigrants from the west brought with them books on philosophy, astrology, astronomy and other subjects along with Hindu ideas and culture. Ideas of Indo-Aryan gods and goddesses came to Manipur with them. Puranic gods like Shiva and Devi rose to prominence in the time of the Imperial Guptas. Vishnu, although a Vedic god, was not very prominent in the Vedic period. He rose to great prominence in the Gupta period. Ideas of Puranic gods also came to Manipur along with the later immigrants. By the end of the 8th century, the Manipuris were already familiar with Puranic gods and goddesses like Shiva, Devi and Ganesh. The immigrants contributed much to the richness of life and literature of Manipur.

The history of Burma also throws some light on the migration of people from Burma to Manipur and from Manipur to Burma. Thus the influx of Shans to Manipur in the medieval ages found in Manipuri records is to some extent corroborated by the history of Burma. It is also probable that Manipuri Brahmins practised Astrology in Burma at least from the thirteenth century onwards [9].

Clans

There are seven clans among the Manipuris. Most Manipuris belong to one or other of the seven clans viz. (i) the Ningthoujas (ii) the Angoms (iii) the Khumans (iv) the Moirangs (v) the Luwangs (vi) the Sarang-Leishangthems and (vii) the Khaba-Nganbas.

Among these clans, the Ningthoujas and the Angoms trace descent from the Sun and the Moon respectively [10]. Each of the seven clans had its separate usual place of abode. The Manipuri society is patrilineal and patriarchal.

9. Hla Pen : *Burmese Proverbs* (Introductory portion)
10. An inference from the book *Apoklon.*

The Angoms, the Sarang-Leishangthems and the Khaba-Nganbas have been living in the Manipur Valley from before the beginning of the Christian era. In 33 A.D., we fiind all the clans except the Ningthoujas firmly established in well-defined separate regions in the Valley.

Heptarchy

Each of the seven clans had an independent principality of its own in its well-defined region. Each principality was headed by a prince. He was aided and advised by a Council of Nobles. It also appears that in very early times, the prince was also the *pontifex maximus.* It must not be supposed that a man belonging to a particular clan, say the Khumans, could live only in the Khuman Principality. He could freely live in the principality of any other clan, say the Angom Principality, provided he owed allegiance to his principality of domicile. The division of the Valley into seven principalities, independent of one another, is what is called Heptarchy. It continued for a few centuries after 33 A.D.

It is difficult at this distance of time to trace precisely the boundaries of the seven principalities. But their sites can be located. Ningthouja Principality was on the right bank of the Imphal River and both banks of the Nambul River. Its capital was at Kangla, the site now occupied by the Assam Rifles, near the Raj Bhavan. It was bounded on the east by the Imphal River ; on the south by the northern limits of the Khuman Principality ; on the west by the lake Lamphel and the hillock Langjing and on the north by Chingmeirong Hill. It thus comprised modern Imphal West and some of its suburbs. Angom Principality lay to the east and north-east of Ningthouja Principality. Modern Pukhao and Chalou were in Angom Principality. Luwang Principality comprised the region between Langjing and Koubru. Khuman Principality covered a comparatively large area. The important lakes Ikop and Pumlen, all noted for fishery, were in this

principality. Its capital was famed in Old and Medieval Manipuri literature as *Nongyai chaoba pung* (the big town of the Nongyais i e. the Khumans). The capital was at first at Thoubal and then at Mayang Imphal The principality was bounded on the west by the lake Logtag ; on the south by independent villages of some peoples like the Heirem Khunjans ; on the east by villages of hill-tribes ; and on the north by Ningthouja Principality and Angom Principality. Moirang Principality was bounded on the north-east by Logtag ; on the east by the Imphal River , on the south by hill-villages ; on the west also by hill villages ; on the north by Luwang and Ningthouja Principalities Its capital was at Moirang about 27 miles to the south-south west of Imphal. The boundaries of the principalities of the Sarang-Leisangthems and the Khaba-Nganbas are more difficult to trace ; because these principalities bore the brunt of Pakhangba's attack (see Chapter IV).

Challenges accepted

The Manipur Valley and the hills surrounding it were under the sea Sedimentary and metamorphic rocks in and around the Valley and the fossil of a cuttlefish found on a hill on the Imphal-Tamenglong road prove this point. Even after the Manipur Valley and the surrounding hills were raised above the sea, the Valley was mostly covered with lakes and swamps It was at one time conjectured that the entire Valley was a wide lake According to this conjecture, it gradually silted up because of the action of rivers and became dry land and the big lakes like Logtag and Pumlen are remnants of that ancient wide lake Geological investigation has found this erroneous[11]. The Valley is as old as the hills.

The fertile soil and the bountiful monsoon were beneficial not only to crops but also to the grass and the forest. Two thousand years ago, the Valley and the hills were covered with tall grass jungles and dense forests infested with tigers,

11 Imperial Gazeteer of India Vol. IV

elephants and venomous snakes The soil was water-
in the monsoon. Pythons and other snakes abounded in the swamps and the lakes. Winters were long and foggy with snowfall in mid winter The climate was damper and colder. It was in the midst of this surrounding that the Manipuris eked out their living, and, by dint of their courage, intellect and labour, gradually rose on the scale of civilisation.

The challenge of Nature was great ; but it was not the only challenge. The other challenge came from fellow men—men of neighbouring countries The Manipuris accepted the challenges of Nature and men and gave adequate response They also responded to the beauty of Nature and succeeded in creating an oasis of civilisation in the midst of hills covered with forests.

The response of the Manipuri people to these challenges and to the beauty of Nature during the last 2,300 years or so will be gradually unfolded in the following pages

CHAPTER – III

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Let us first deal with the religion of the Manipuris from the first century to about the seventh century A. D Our knowledge of the ancestors of the Manipuris before the beginning of the Christian era is at present scanty and largely conjectural It is however, gratifying that the spade of the archeologist has now come to the aid of the historian But the finds of the excavations have yet to be correctly evaluated

Worship of natural objects

From the first century to the seventh century A.D the Manipuris worshipped Fire, the Sun, Soraren (the god of rain and thunder who was also the king of gods) and the god of the homestead We find some traces of the worship of the Wind also In this period, gods were not many. Goddesses were few and occupied less important positions than gods

Fire-worship

Fire was worshipped in every home The Manipuri dwelling-house invariably faced the east The fire-place was located at the centre of the house There fire was kept constantly burning day and night by burning husk. The Manipuris addressed the brightly burning Fire as the substitute of the Sun.

We may remember that Poireiton brought fire to Manipur when he migrated to this place. In some Old Manipuri hymns, Fire is addressed as "Fire brought by Poireiton ! Fire used by Poireiton's brother in founding villages !"

The Manipuri way of worshipping Fire is strongly reminescent of the Vedic Aryans. Some hymns in the first *anuvaka* of the sixth *mandala* of the Rig Veda[1] clearly show that the Vedic Aryans worshipped Fire inside the dwelling-house also Other hymns i the *mandala*[2] compare the brightly burning Fire to the Sun and allude to the belief of the Vedic Aryans that at sunset, the Sun entered Fire and as a result, Fire burnt brightly at night. It is a Vedic belief that at night Fire is the representative of the sun Next to Indra, Fire is the most important Vedic god

In Old Manipuri, fire is called *khamhi* Sanskrit *agni* (fire) became *gani* in Pali and *aggi* in Prakrit The Indo-Aryan settlers in Manipur called fire *gani* which, in the mouth of their Mongoloid wives and their children, became **gami* and then **khami*. Worship of Fire continued from generation to generation Descendants of the descendants of the Indo-Aryan settlers came to call fire **khami* and then *khambi*.

The Sun

The Manipuris worshipped the Sun as a god. He was believed to travel accross the sky everyday on a winged horse In Old Manipuri there are a few hymns addressed to the Sun. One of them reads :

I,a human being,
Cannot describe in my lay
The full glory of the immortal Sun,
The chief among gods.
O Sun ! Great jewel of daytime !
Thou art Fire giving warmth on Earth's back ;
Give unto me the precious gem,
The gift of immortals,
That lengthens the lease of life.

1 The Rig Veda Samhita translated by Wilson 2. ibid.

This hymn portrays the beliefs of the ancient and medieval Manipuris about the sun. To them, the sun was an immortal god—referred to as 'the immortal Sun the chief among gods' in the hymn. He was the jewel of daytime. The sun was also Fire giving warmth on Earth's back from his high position in the sky. We have also seen that in ancient times, Manipur was a cold place of long, foggy winters with snowfall in mid winter. The ancient Manipuris found emperically that there is something in the sunshine beneficial to health which also lengthens life. This is a precious gem which only immortals can give. The worshipper is praying to the sun-god for it.

This hymn is reminescent of many Rig Vedic hymns. The Sun is here identified with Fire. This is in keeping with Vedic thought. According to it, Agni (Fire) occurs in three forms [3]: He may appear as the fire in the sky i.e. the Sun; he may also appear as the fire man produces by friction as for instance by rubbing two pieces of wood together; and he may also appear as the fire in rain-clouds i.e. lightning.

In the last three lines of the hymn, the Old Manipuri word used for the sun is *thabi*. In the Rig Veda, the sun as the great cause of life, health and longevity is called *savitri*. This word became *savi* One of the words the Indo-Aryan settlers in Manipur used for the sun was *savi*. In the mouth of their descendants, it became *thabi*.

The god of rain : Soraren

The ancient Manipuris believed in a god of rain. He was also the king of gods. His abode was in the azure sky far, far above the earth and his weapon was the thunderbolt. His name is Soraren. To the popular mind, Soraren is identified with the blue sky. To this day unsophisticated men and women speak of the open blue sky as *soraren*.

Belief in a god of rain who wielded the thunderbolt as his weapon is widespread among Indo-European nations. It is

3. Hymn No. 45 of Book X of the Rig Veda.

interesting that in the mythology of these nations he was also the king of gods. In the Rig Veda Samhita, Indra receives the largest number of hymns.

A hymn in Old Manipuri reads :

O Soraren ! Thy abode is in the sky ;
O King ! Wieldest thou the thunderbolt,
Strikest thou with unerring aim.
* * * *
* * * *
Administrator of justice above the clouds !
To thee we bow down
Give unto us prosperity.

Sky god

The Manipuris believed in a sky-god. But so far we have not come across any hymn addressed to him. In medieval times, he was personified as the Sky the immortal guru (Atiya Guru Shidaba). The Earth was conceived of as a goddess and as the consort of the Sky.

The god of the homestead

The Manipuris also believed in a god of the homestead. He was the king of the dwelling-house, He protected the family from evil spirits and diseases. No burglar could enter the house except with his connivance. Burglars before sneaking into a house first prayed to the god of the homestead to allow him to enter the house and carry out his work undetected. Householders on the other hand before going to bed prayed to the god to protect them from thieves and evil spirits.

In times of serious illness in the family the householder (or if he himself was the patient some other member on his behalf) worshipped the god of the home and prayed to him for grant of recovery. It was believed that diseases were caused by malignant spirits. When a member of the household recovered from a serious illness, the convalescent, when he became sufficiently strong, and the physician worshipped the god of the

homestead. We do not know what things were offered in ancient times; but in late medieval times, raw i.e. unboiled juice of sugar-cane and a lighted candle of beeswax the wick of which was ginned cotton were offered to the god to mark the end of the unwelcome relation between the patient and the malignant spirits.

In the Rig Veda, we find a god of the homestead. He was called Vastoshpati. Some hymns are addressed to him. He had functions very similar to those of the god of the homestead we have discussed. We do not know his name in ancient Manipur. In early medieval times, he was called Sanamahi.

Zest for life

The Manipuris of ancient times had a great zest for life. In the hymns to the gods whether Fire, the Sun, Soraren or the god of the homestead, they asked for temporal boons such as health, longevity and worldly prosperity. The Manipuris of this period were dredging their principal rivers, diverting the course of smaller ones to make them more useful, draining marshes, constructing bunds for protection against floods and constructing straight unmetalled roads to make Manipur a better place to live in. They were making clepsydras for measuring time. They were also perfecting the drum for use in times of war and for music and dance.

The Manipuris were not snake-worshippers. They killed snakes. In the climate of eastern India, the cobra is very common. The Indo-Aryan settlers in Manipur called it *gokhurua* because of its having on its hood a mark fancied to resemble the hoof-mark of the cow. Modern Manipuris call it *kharou*. It is a deadly snake. When a full-grown cobra bites a man, it can inject by its fangs enough poison to kill eight adults. Chances of recovery from a bite of the cobra are not much. Had the Manipuris been snake-worshippers, they would be

a doomed people dying in large numbers from snakebite every year and would never be able to rise on the rungs of civilisation.

Aniconic worship

The worship of natural objects by the ancient Manipuris was simple. There was no icon. When they worshipped the Sun, they worshipped the visible orb of the sun. When they worshipped Fire, they worshipped the brightly burning fire. Likewise, when they worshipped Soraren, they spread a seat, say a piece of clean cloth, for the god to sit on and after invocation, they believed that he had come to their midst to accept their simple offerings. In ancient times there was no icon of the god of the homestead.

Buddhism

Some very recent archeological excavations have yielded excellent results. Some valuable finds prove the existence of Buddhism in ancient times in the area now called Imphal and also at Sekta and its neighbourhood. But how ancient these finds are is a point which is yet to be determined. The evidence from these separate finds also still remains to be pieced together. A connected story of the coming of Buddhism can be given only after that. Perhaps it will not be long before a satisfactory interpretation can be given to these finds.

Some marble icons of Buddha have also been found in the Imphal area. But they date back to early medieval times only. We have seen that there was an influx of Shans in the 15th century. A few centuries earlier also, some Shan immigrants came. They came with icons of Buddha. Later, some of them became Manipuris and gave up the worship of Buddha; but they still kept these icons as heirlooms. With the efflux of centuries, they abandoned the icons. We believe that the icons of Buddha which antiquaries have found uptill now in Imphal area are these abandoned icons.

Society

The unit of the society was, as it is now, the family. The father was the head of the family. We call him the householder. He had power over his wife, sons, unmarried daughters and slaves of the family. The sons when they were married could secede from the family and found families of their own and become householders in their own right. The head of the family is called *pater familia.* His power over his sons and daughters is called *patria potestas.* A girl when she was married was escorted to the house of her husband where she hoped to live for the rest of her life. She then passed from the *patria potestas* of her father to the *patria potestas* of her father-in-law.

A woman had to submit to the authority of her husband. This was the case so long as her husband was living. When he died, she had two options. She could remain in the household of her husband or return to her parental home.

Levirate marriage was not in vogoue. The Manipuri-speaking people abhor it. We have seen that Poireiton before he settled in Manipur had a number of children by his sister-in-law. But this was *before* he reached Manipur. After he settled here, his descendants gave up the practice.

Polygyny was in vogoue. It was much in evidence among kings, nobles and the rich But the majority of the people were monogamous. Polygyny had its merit in the ancient Manipuri society· The rate of infant mortility was high. Besides the need of children specially male children was very great. Men were needed to run the affairs of the state and to defend its frontiers against aggression by neighbouring peoples. They also had to protect their villages from the depredations of wild animals like tigers and elephants Women did household duties includin_ arduous ones like husking rice. But men had to do the more hazardous and laborious works like cutting wood in the forest or mowing thatch in the grass jungle for roofing the house.

This was in addition to hard labour like rowing boats for transport of merchandise on rivers or across lakes. But polygyny had its defects. It was a fruitful source of quarrels among co-wives disturbing the peace of the family or among half-brothers which at times threatened the peace and tranquility of the state.

Polyandry was not in vogue. It is something unthinkable to the Manipuri.

Marriage

Panthoibi Khongoon (In Quest of Panthoibi), a book written in the 17th century but depicting a society of about the first century A.D., gives some details of a Manipuri marriage. Marriages were usually arranged by parents. When a youth attained the marrigeable age, his parents took the initiative. They sought out a girl of their choice to be their daughter-in-law. Perhaps they took into consideration the likes and dislikes of their son through an itermediary. They went with some presents to the parents of the girl to seek her hand for their son. If the parents of the girl responded favourably, a date was fixed to make a formal proposal. After these preliminaries, the date for the marriage was fixed. The marriage was held at the house of the bride. After that she was taken in a procession to the house of the bridegroom. The bridegroom's father gave a feast to the bride's party.

A form of marriage of the type called *gandharva* marriage was also in vogue. But in this case also parents of the youth and the girl gave their approval.

Marriage by capture specially after a war or battle was also in vogue. In the next chapter we will find a good instance of this.

Exogamy

Every clan in the Manipuri society was exogamous. A man belonging to a clan, say the Ningthoujas, could not marry in his clan. He had to look for his bride from some other

clan, say the Moirangs or the Khumans. The Manipuris strictly followed exogamy. This prevented in-breeding and conferred many benefits. It encouraged the spirit of adventure and self-development. It was also one of the means of uniting the entire Manipuri-speaking community into a closely knit society.

Men being what they are, there were occasional violations of this custom. The guilty were punished with excommunication and transportation to a penal settlement.

Slavery

Slavery existed in the Manipuri society. Aristotle defended slavery saying that it was a natural institution. We do not go to that length. It is an evil institution. But in the days before Man could harness electricity or steam, slave-labour augmented animal-power. Freemen had more time to devote themselves to scientific enquiry or persuit of art and literature.

In Manipur also slave women did the household chores while their mistress and her daughters wove. Male slaves kept the compound of the house neat and clean, did gardening, cut firewood for the kitchen and did other manual works.

Slaves had the right of peculiam i.e. the right to hold private property. After doing the works for their master, they could earn by their manual labour or artistic skill and keep the earnings for themselves. With the money earned thus, they could purchase back their freedom. For meritorious work, long service or as an act of piety and compassion, a master often manumitted slaves.

Extent of *patria potestas*

The Manipuri father in ancient times had very wide powers over his children. Whether this power included the power to inflict death we cannot say. But he could expel them from home or exile them from the country. The popular legend *Khongjong-nubi Nongaron*. (The Pleiades' Ascent to

the Firmament). which reflects the society of ancient times, narrates the story of how six unmarried girls were expelled from their homes by their fathers for improper conduct. The popular story of Khamba and Thoibi, which has assumed epic length, gives the story of how Thoibi, the heroine of the story, was exiled by her father to a principality of the Kabaws, a branch of the Shans. This is clearly an instance of a father sending his child into exile in exercise of *patria potestas*. The prince of Moirang, an independent principality at that time, could not intervene as it was a purely domestic matter according to the notions of those days. In fact the prince of Moirang and his court had no say and were completely out of picture in the exile of Thoibi. In the the modern state a father has no such power.

Limited functions of the state

The wide powers of the head of the family over his wife and children leads us to a consideration of the state. Wide powers for the head of the family means less power for the state.

Ningthouja Principality was founded in 33 A.D. For several centuries after that, it exercised only a few functions. The prime need of the time was the stability of the state itself. There was constant struggle for supremacy among the principalities in the Valley. Any principality might attack any other principality at any time. In the Ningthouja Principality also, rebellion might break out sometimes. The government therefore had to remain alert for all the time. So the state chose to exercise only a few most essential functions such as defending itself against outside invasion, suppressing internal rebellion, punishment of the more serious crimes and the undertaking of the most immediate development works.

Even in serious crimes like murder, there was much room for private vengeance. Men could also settle their old scores by duel. People had faith in divine judgement. In an armed

combat for settlement of a dispute, it was believed that the gods would side with the just and make the divine judgement known through the defeat of the guilty

In such an atmosphere, adjudication of civil disputes received very low priority The power which was not exercised by the state was exercised by the head of the family, family elders and village elders This was the society for a number of centuries after the founding of the Ningthouja Principality

With the passage of centuries it became clear that in a duel the just did not always win nor did the guilty always lose Success in a duel depends on skill and chance. People began to realise it By the turn of the 17th century, they began to lose faith in duel as a mode of trial By that time, the state also became sufficiently strong So it suppressed duelling There was no duel after 1652 *

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* For further reading see author's A History of Manip Literature Vol. I pp 20 to 30 and pp. 75 to 83.

CHAPTER—IV

PAKHANGBA AND HIS SIX SUCCESSORS

From about 28 A.D. to about the spring of 33 A.D., what we now call Imphal West, some of its suburbs and nearby villages were occupied by the Pongs[1], a branch of the Shans. Their capital was at Mogaung in Upper Burma on a bank of a tributary of the Irrawady. Its latitude is 25°18' North and longitude is 96°56' East. It is thus not far away from Burma-China border. In ancient and medieval times, Mogaung was a prosperous city.

The Shans gave names to places and rivers in the portion of Manipur they occupied. They were ousted from Manipur by a clan of the Manipuris called the Ningthoujas. But some of the names the Shans gave nearly 2,000 years ago still persist. There is a small river called the Nambul flowing through the heart of the Imphal city. It is just a stream. We call it a river in the sense of a natural stream flowing in a definite channel. Its name is in Shan. The first part, *nam*, means water or a river. Here it means a river. The second part, *bul*, is modern pronunciation for *pun*. It is an adjective qualifying *nam*. But it is not explained so far. The lower course of this small river is called the Yangoi. Because the Shans occupied Imphal West, some of its immediate suburbs and some villages only. To be more precise, the authority of the Shans extended only to those villages along the course of this

1. *Kangleiron*.

river where it is called the Nambul. Their territory did not extend to the places where the river is called the Yangoi.

The Shans were also masters of a tract of land covered by the modern villages of Nungu, Wangu, and the nearby villages. The second part of the name Wangu means snake in Shan. The first part is unexplained. So is the case with the name Nungu. The second part means snake ; the first part is unexplained.

Vacant throne

For some reason not yet known, the throne of the principality which came to be known as Ningthouja Principality from 33 A.D. on wards fell vacant in the spring of that year. A man named Pakhangba had distinguished himself as a warrior. He had obtained a foothold near the bank of the River Irin—the self-same river which much helped traders, colonisers and invaders in going to Burma. The Angoms, a clan of the Manipuris, informed Pakhangba that the throne had become vacant and invited him to fight for it. It appears that the Nganbas, another clan, sponsored Poireiton for it.

Pakhangba fought for the throne with Poireiton and thoroughly defeated him in a decisive battle. He seized all his weapons and the women who came in his horde. He carried away some women of the Nganbas also. Poireiton's brother complained to the prince of the Nganbas that Pakhangba had carried off their women [2]. The prince replied that he had carried off their women too [3]. The way was now clear for Pakhangba to ascend the throne.

Causes of Pakhangba's success

Pakhangba was a practical man Poireiton was a man of woolly ideas. Searching for men free from disease and death was something suited to his mind. Seizing the throne, suppressing enemies and founding a long dynasty of kings appealed to the practical mind of Pakhangba. Secondly,

2 and 3. *Pakhangba Nongaron.*

Poireiton was completely a new comer unacquainted with conditions in Manipur ; while Pakhangba had got a foothold and become acquainted with local conditions. Thirdly, Pakhangba's trained warriors were no match for Poireiton's militia Lastly, Pakhangba had better weapons. He and his men were armed with swords and perhaps with spears, bows and arrows Poireiton and his men were armed with axes and bows and arrows. Axes are better suited to cutting firewood or felling trees In the battlefield, it lacks the versatility of the sword

Pakhangba's accession

Pakhangba came along the Irin and then along the range of a low hill now called Heingang hill. His was a triumphant march with swords and flaming torches[4] A big royal canopy—a part or the regalia—was held over his head[5]. He reached Kangla, the present cantonment of the Assam Rifles

Pakhangba ascended the throne in 33 A D in the Manipuri month now called Kalen It roughly corresponds to the English month of May

According to the Royal Chronicle*, he ascended the throne in the 3,135th year of the Kali *yuga* Evidently, the Royal Chronicle is speaking in terms of Kalyabda—an era prevalent throughought India before the advent of the Shaka era Kalyabda began in February 3,102 B C Therefore, 3,135 Kalyabda will mean 33 A D That is why we place the accession of Pakhangba in 33 A D. There is another reason The Royal Chronicle also says that the Shaka era began in the 45th year of Pakhangba's reign Since he ascended the throne in 33 A D. in approximately May, the 45th year of his reign will mean 78 A. D From the middle of April to the end of December every year, there is a difference of 78 years between the Christian era and the Shaka era. From this angle also, Pakhangba ascended the throne in 33 A.D.

and 5 NL * See Glossary

Consolidation of power

Pakhangba consolidated his position with an iron will. Most of his erstwhile enemies accepted him as their new king. But some resisted. He was severe with them, as was the practice in those days. Some fled to the hills to escape from him. But those who fled to the north perished in the hoarfrost of the cold winter of northern hills. Those who fled to the north-east lost their identity and merged in the local hill population.

The Sarang-Leishangthems and the Khabas and the Nganbas bore the brunt of his attacks in his drive for consolidation. Once the Khabas expelled him and he fled to Moirang. After some time he regained his throne.

The reign of Pakhangba

Pakhangba was the first maker of Manipur. His reign was long and successful. The prime necessity of his time was a strong and stable government. His long and strong reign gave the much needed peace.

He was a man of even-handed justice. Manipuri books, particularly the Royal Chronicle, say that he was divine by day and human by night. This means that during the day he attended to his royal duties and administered justice with such excellence that he was like a god. But at night, he was available to the members of his family, friends and relatives and at that time, he was a good husband, a good father, a good friend and a good relative. He then eschewed the majesty of kingship and behaved like an ordinary humanbeing.

The condition of Manipur was very undeveloped in his reign[6]. Most of the area was covered with lakes and fens. There were thick woods in the Valley[7] and the population was small[8]. The poorer section of the people lived in huts with walls of reed[9]. The climate must have been damper

6 to 9 NLp. 4.

The autumn mornings must have been foggy. The winter must have been long and cold and the summer, short and mild. The rainfall must have been heavier than at present. All these must have added to the hardship of the poorer section of his subjects.

The people lived on rice. They also ate Job's tears[10]. They cultivated their fields and grew rice and ricked the straw[11]. There were potters among the Chakpas, a Tibeto-Burman people, and they baked their pottery[12]. Whether the people of Manipur in Pakhangba's time used the potter's wheel is still an open question.

A farmer usually made a fire to perform a sacrifice to enhance the produce of the field[13]. The rivers and the streams were the chief means of communication. We expect some international trade with the peoples of what is now called Upper Burma and China-Burma border. We expect some fabulously rich merchants.

Society

The people in the Ningthouja Principality belonged to two different races. One was the Mongoloid race forming the bulk of the population. Laisna, Pakhangba's queen, belonged to this race. She was Poireiton's sister and came in his horde.

On the other hand, Pakhangba belonged to an altogether different race. His race regarded Laisna's race as inferior. Pakhangba, therefore, could not present his wife to his friends and relatives for a long time. It was at long last and at Laisna's own request, that he broached the subject to his friends. He got a favourable response and presented her to them. To celebrate the occasion, the king and his nobles played hockey on horseback. This hockey on horseback was a game resembling polo.

10 Inference from PK 11 to 13 NL.

Pakhangba claimed divinity. Ashoka the Great merely claimed that he was the beloved of the gods *(devanam piya)*. But Indian kings after him claimed divinity for themselves.

Inspite of great differences e.g. levirate marriage, the Mongoloid peoples and Pakhangba's race were coming closer together. As has been said above Pakhangba carried off women from Poireiton's horde and the principality of the Nganbas. Presumably, they became wives of the victorious warriors. Their children were the cementing bonds between the two races.

Achievements

He is the first king of Manipur of whom we can speak with some certainty He was the first maker of Manipur. His achievement was to put his principality on a sound footing. In course of centuries, his principality absorbed all other principalities.

The Royal Chronicle credits him with a long reign of 120 years. On this point, however, we are to take the account of the Royal Chronicle with a grain of salt.

Origin of Pakhangba

It is not easy to find out the origin of a man who flourished about two thousand years ago. But in habit and the way of life, he and his six immediate successors stand apart from later kings. The Royal Chronicle says[14] that these Seven Ancient Kings were gods, and that the later kings from the eighth king onwards were human beings.

The Indians were very active in the first and second centuries A D [15]. During this period they penetrated into Burma and founded numerous Hindu kingdoms there[16]. There were Hindu kingdoms in Burma near the Manipur and Assam hills[17]. Indians went to Burma in search of regal power[18].

Some very late manuscripts say something on the identity of Pakhangba. But they are not earlier than the 17th century

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14. On p.2. 15, 16 and 18. W.S Desai : *a Pageant of Burmese History* p. 2. 17. *AAR p 13*

whereas he was born in the first century A.D. We must base our findings on the best available evidence. With our better understanding of the history of the Manipuri language and of the culture and society of the Manipuri people, we are nearer to the solution of the problem But we must search for more evidence. But if it is found afterwards that he was an Indo-Aryan-speaking Indian prince brought up in Manipur, seeking his fortune and regal power on the Indo-Burma border, we shall not be surprised

Death of Pakhangba

The Royal Chronicle says that no one knows when and how the Seven Ancient Kings died or vanished We believe that they followed the ancient practice of *vanaprastha*, laid down kingship, retired to the forest and died there unknown Some time after the Mahabharata war, Dritarashtra and Gandhari retired to the forest, lived there and died in a forest fire. The fact of their death is known because Yudhishthira kept an affectionate and careful watch over them Had he not done so, no one would know how and when they died.

We also believe that after the death of the last of the Seven Ancient Kings, the practice of *vanaprastha* died out because of the efflux of time and the consequent changed circumstances.

Sanskrit names

There is a manuscript purporting to give the Sanskrit names of the kings of Manipur from 33 A D. onwards. In the list of kings also, sometimes we find their Sanskrit names. In them, Pakhangba's Sanskrit name is given as Yavishtha. But *Yavishtha* is an adjective. How is it used as a noun? Is any component missing? Writers of high authority sometimes use an adjective as a noun. Is it such a case?

Khuyoi Tompok

According to the Royal Chronicle, Khuyoi Tompok ascended the throne in 76 Shakabda. Roughly, it corresponds

to 154 A D. His other name is shown to be Kshema Chandra in some manuscripts The first part of the name seems to be a slight deviation from Sanskrit *kshama* (pardon). He was Pakhangba's son by Laisna

His reign is memorable for two achievements. One is the establishment of an institution for measurement of time The other is the perfection of the drum.

Measurement of time

This was by means of a clepsydra It is called *tan* in Manipuri It is a simple instrument It consists of a cistern partly filled with water and a copper bowl with a tiny hole at the bottom The bowl is floated on the water in the cistern Water comes into the bowl through the hole and it sinks gradually The bowl is of standard capacity and standard weight So the time taken by the bowl to sink is constant In the instrument used by the Manipuris, the bowl takes 22½ minutes to sink An abacus is kept near the cistern to facilitate counting

The time taken by the bowl to sink by its own weight and the weight of the water leaking in i e 22½ minutes is called one 'hour' Eight such 'hours' (i e 22½×8 minutes or 180 minutes) make one *yuthag* Eight such *yuthags* make one day

The passing of each *yuthag* was announced by the beating of a huge drum kept in the office of the time-keepers.

Benefits

The establishment of the office of the time-keepers in the reign of Khuyoi Tompok was a major advancement. It is not that the measurement of time was not known before him. But it was he who established a regular office for measuring time Expert time-keepers by turn measured time night and day all the year round and announced the passing of time It is true that by seeing the position of the sun in the sky or that of constellations at night, one can have an approximate idea of the time. But the result obtained with the clepsydra is more accurate. Besides

clouds or fog could no longer conceal time by hiding the sun or the stars. The nearly accurate measurement of time helped the Manipuris much in rising on the rungs of culture and civilisation.

Hindu method

The method of measuring time by means of a perforated bowl floated on water is ancient in India. It is described in *Surya Siddhanta*, an authority on Astronomy, redacted about the 4th century A D. It is also described in the *Bhagavata Purana*, written about the 4th century A D. although redacted much later. The perforated copper bowl floated on water is called *ukalika* in Sanskrit. It is also called *nadika* or *ghatika*. The time taken by the bowl to sink is called one *nadika* or one *ghatika* The time from sunrise to the next sunrise is one day. In Hindu method it is divided into 8 equal parts. A part is called one *yama* or *prahara* in Sanskrit and one *yuthag* in Manipuri. The word *yuthag* has been in use since early medieval times. The word used in ancient times is not yet traced. The whole instrument consisting of the perforated bowl floated on water in the cistern is called *manarandhra* in Sanskrit.

The Greeks reckoned the day from sunset to sunset and the Romans, from midnight to midnight. The Manipuris reckon the day from sunrise to sunrise.

Experiments in making drums

Another achievement of the reign of Khuyoi Tompok is the perfection of the drum. Experiments were made. Deer-skin was tried first. The result was unsatisfactory. Tiger-skin was tried ext. This time too the result was unsatisfactory. Then they ied the skin of the cow and they got a nice sound, so familiar n our time.

The experiments in making drums helped advancement in lance and music. It was of some use in warfare also.

End of the reign

The Royal Chronicle credits him with a reign of 110 years. There might be some mistake in the calculation.

TAOTHING MANG

According to the Royal Chronicle, Khuyoi Tompok was succeeded on the throne by Taothing Mang in 186 Shakabda (264 A.D.). Taothing Mang was Khuyoi Tompok's son. His other name Jalagatya sounds like Sanskrit ; but what is the meaning of *gatya* ? The first part of course means water.

Draining the Manipur Valley

We have already referred to the condition of the Manipur Valley in the first century A.D. If the people of Manipur were to survive, draining of marshes and inhabited areas was of utmost importance. The problem of draining them was inter-connected with that of dredging the rivers ; for the water of the marshes and human habitations had to be let off into the rivers. The problem was further complicated by the political condition of the Valley. The Ningthoujas were not yet masters of the whole Valley. They had no control over the portion of the Irin flowing through another territory. Taking into consideration the smallness of the population and the non-existence of powerful engines for digging and removing earth in ancient times, the task was herculean.

Taothing Mang took up the major work of draining the entire Valley. All his subjects joined. He was ably helped by his brother Yoi Mongba. He dredged the River Imphal upto the point it leaves the Valley. He also dredged the head-waters of the Irin.

A pioneer historian of Manipur says that Taothing Mang also diverted the Nambul to its present course*. The course of this river through the capital city Imphal and its suburbs covering a distance of about 10 miles (about 16 kilometres) is mostly in straight lines like an irrigation canal. It shows that the present course through the city and its suburbs is man-made. The diversion of the Nambul was before the 15th century ; for in the 15th century, we find the river flowing in the present course. It was probably Taothing Mang who diverted the river.

* Mutua Jhulon : *Vijay Panchalee* p. 49.

Benefits

Taothing Mang's work was a great achievement. The drainage-basin of the Imphal and the Irin cover practically the whole of the Valley. The Nambul and many other streams flow into Logtag. The excess water of this lake flows out in a stream called the Khordag, which flows into the River Imphal. The catchment-area of the Imphal therefore includes the catchment areas of the Nambul and the other streams flowing into Logtag.

Draining of marshes and dredging the rivers made the people a little healthier. flood-control a little easier and the soil a little more productive and less damp by appreciably lowering the water-table. They also made the mornings a little less foggy and the Valley a little more comfortable. The River Imphal now became the artery of communication in this Valley.

The diversion of the Nambul to its present course through the city and its southern suburbs also benefitted the people much. The river served this thickly populated area as a very important water-way till modern times when lorries and the motor car took over Since the river flows into Logtag, the principality of Moirang and all villages on the shores of the lake were within easy reach of the power at Kangla. The new course of the Nambul drained Imphal West nicely In the days before insecticides, the small river abounded in all kinds of fish found in Logtag, because of their habit of swimming against the current in certain seasons of the year

The people of Manipur are still enjoying the benefits of the reign of Taothing Mang.

Difficulties of the project

The project has benefitted the people of Manipur much. But it was not completed without grave risks to the life and person of the king and his brother. A certain Phunal Telheiba (lit. the Skilled Archer) of the Angom clan created some trouble in dredging the Imphal He wounded the king with an arrow, which fortunately did not prove fatal. They were also exposed

to the danger of a large and strong bird of prey A Manipuri book *Tudeng Lon* (the Lore of Dredging Rivers) says that it could carry away even men. The brothers trapped the bird and killed it.

Was it a bird of the falcon family ? Its family is not determined yet

Territorial expansion

While the king and his brother were engaged in improving the drainage system, they came across a number of villages in the southern extremity of the Valley This region called Lokha Haokha is now Sugunu and its neighbourhood They conquered the villages and realised tribute from them This is the first territorial expansion of the Ningthoujas recorded in the Royal Chronicle

Successful reign

According to the Royal Chronicle Taothing Mang reigned 100 years According to *Pakhangba Nongaron*, a late work, purporting to give an account of the death of kings, Taothing Mang after reigning 100 years, merged in the Lord of the Universe, the Supreme God

Khui Ningomba

Khui Ningomba, Taothing Mang's son, succeeded his father on the throne in 364 A D His another name is said to be Khaga Deep He is credited with extension of human habitations in the Valley by clearing forests There was oppressive abundance of woods in the Valley in the time of Khuyoi Tompok[12] Taothing Mang devoted his reign to improving the drainage of the whole Valley but could not attend to the problem of the superabundance of woods What was left undone by his father was completed by Khui Ningomba.

12,NL p 5

A passage relating to Khui Ningomba in *Ningthouron Lambuba* is obscure. One interpretation is that he was the monarch of three regions speaking three different languages

He reigned 15 years.

Khui Ningomba's Successors

Khui Ningomba was succeeded on the throne by his son Pengsiba in 379 A.D. His another name is said to be Punya Kshema. He reigned 15 years.

Pengsiba was succeeded by his son Kao Khangba on the throne in 394. His another name is said to be Ekadara.

Kao Khangba's son Naokhamba succeeded his father on the throne in 411. He is the last of the Seven Ancient Kings.

Vegetables

What vegetables did the people eat in the time of the Seven Ancient Kings? For Western India, we know from *Gatha Sapta Shati*, a collection of 700 couplets in Maharashtri Prakrit, what plants men and women used in the first and second centuries A.D. For regions on the eastern frontier of India, there is no such book. The Royal Chronicle is silent on such questions till we come to medieval times.

Among the vegetables the people ate in the time of the Seven Ancient Kings we know of mustard leaf (Modern Manipuri *hangam*), egg-fruit (Modern Manipuri *khamen*), sweet gourd (*Momordica cochinchinensis*, Modern Manipuri *karol*) pumpkin (Modern Manipuri *mairen*), gourd (Modern Manipuri *khongdrum* and sponge gourd (*Luffa aegyptica* also called *Luffa cylindrica*, Modern Manipuri *sebot*). These are very old vegetables. The people of India have been eating them from ancient times.

The mustard is called *sarshapa* in Sanskrit. The Indo-Aryan settlers in Manipur called it **harkhap*. Egg-fruit is called *vatingana* in Sanskrit. The Indo-Aryan settlers called it **vatingane*. A related species of sweet gourd is called *karvella* in Sanskrit; the Indo-Aryan settlers called it **karvola*. They called pumpkin (Sanskrit *kushmanda*) **kumare*. Modern Manipuri

khongdrum (gourd) is of uncertain derivation at the moment. A related species of the sponge gourd is called *jimuta* in Sanskrit. When the Indo-Aryan settlers found the sponge gourd in Manipur, they called it **jimut* because of the similarity. The Modern Manipuri names evolved out of the names the new settlers gave to these vegetables.

The sugar-cane too is an ancient plant The people of India have been using it since the Vedic age It is called *ikshu* in Vedic Sanskrit. The Indo-Aryan settlers in Manipur called it *ichchu*. Their Mongoloid wives and their descendants called it **ichu* because of certain speech habits People chewed it for the sweet taste. They extracted its sweet juice by various means and used it in various ways to add colour to life.

For giving a hot taste to dishes to make them more agreeable, the people used ginger and called it *shingavera* (Sanskrit *shringavera* ; Modern Manipuri *shing*)

Metals

In the time of the Seven Ancient Kings, the people of Manipur used iron, copper, brass, bronze, gold and silver. Iron is called *ayas* in Vedic Sanskrit The Indo-Aryan settlers in Manipur called it **ayos* Bronze is called in Manipuri *sel*. The word probably came from Chinese In Sanskrit gold is called *suvarna*, which became *suanna* in Prakrit. The Indo-Aryan immigrants when they settled in Manipur called gold *suanna*, from which word Modern Manipuri *sana* (gold) is derived Silver is called *roupya* in Sanskrit. The Indo-Aryan immigrants called it *ruppa*, from which the Modern Manipuri word *lupa* (silver) is derived.

The horse

One of the animals which greatly helped the Manipuris in rising on the rungs of culture and civilisation and in maintaining independence for nearly two thousand years is the horse. In the days before telegraphy, the swiftest means of sending messages over long distances was to send them through messengers on horseback. The horse served the Manipuris in war and peace.

Sanskrit has many words to denote the horse. *Out of them, turanga* is one This word became *turango* in Pali. The Pali-speaking settlers in Manipur therefore called the horse *turango* , but their Mongoloid wives and descendants called the horse *go* because of their habit of pronouncing *r* sound as *l* sound It is from *tulango* that Old Manipuri got its word *langoi* (the horse)

The Shans called the horse *maa* There is very little affinity between Manipuri and Shan in vocabulary Contact of the Manipuris with the ethnic Burmese in the time of the Seven Ancient Kings is out of question The ethnic Burmese had not yet arrived in the valley of the Irrawaddy, known to the Manipuris much later as the Airavati The use of the horse in India is very ancient

The Manipuris used the horse mainly as a noble animal—not for tilling land or drawing heavy loads The king and the nobility used the horse for travelling, war and on ceremonial occasions But merchants used the horse as a pack-animal It was with the help of the horse that Manipuri merchants frequented Upper Burma and China-Burma border and traded with the Chinese and the Shans

We believe from recent archeological finds that some of the merchants of this period were very rich—drinking water from vessels of gold and eating from plates of silver and perhaps of gold

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CHAPTER – V

NAOPHANGBA AND HIS THREE SUCCESSORS

Naophangba ascended the throne of the Ningthouja kingdom in 428. His another name is shown to be Nilamani in some manuscripts. He was Naokhamba's son. He had two queens. The first queen was a niece of the prince of the Khumans. At this time their capital was at Thoubal.

We do not know much about him. In his long reign of 90 years, we know of one hunting expedition only. He hunted on a hill called Ngari-yan now but Ngarang-yan in those days. The name was given by the Shelloi-Langmais, a people who inhabited the Nongmaijing hill. In their language, extinct from the 14th century, the name means 'the track of wild animals.'

SAMEIRANG

Sameirang, Naophangba's son by his first queen, ascended the throne in 518. His another name is said to be Shyam Chandra. With his accession, we enter a new phase in the history of Manipur.

The achievements of the Seven Ancient Kings made the Ningthouja kingdom strong enough to absorb the principalities of the other clans. From the time of Sameirang, the Ningthoujas embarked on the policy of conquering and absorbing the principalities one by one. This was an arduous long struggle which took nearly nine centuries. But it was worth trying. Manipur would simply be doomed had it remained divided into small principalities.

Conquest of Angom principality

Sameirang defeated and killed the prince of the Angoms and realised tribute from the Angoms. This was the beginning of the protracted conflicts between the two clans which ultimately led to the absorption of the Angom principality in the Ningthouja kingdom. But one point must be clearly understood. Although tributes were realised from the Angom principality, it continued to preserve its separate identity for a long time. It was still a powerful principality and on one occasion could even defeat the Ningthouja king. But on the whole the Ningthoujas proved the stronger of the two.

The custom of feasting nobles and warriors on the eve of a battle began from this time. Sameirang reigned 50 years.

URA KONTHOUBA

Sameirang was succeeded on the throne by his son Ura Konthouba in 568. His another name, according to some manuscripts, is Kavi Chandra.

He was named Ura Konthouba because his hair on the nape looked like the tail of *ura konthou*, a water-fowl once common in the area now called Imphal. The Royal Chronicle credits him with a reign of 90 years.

Policy of peace

The powerful clans of his time besides the Ningthoujas were the Khumans, the Moirangs, the Luwangs and the Angoms. Ura Konthouba persued a policy of peace towards all these principalities as this would be conducive to the prosperity of his kingdom and all the principalities. His own grandmother was the niece of the Khuman prince. He saw to it that his kingdom was in good terms with the princes of all these principalities. This arrangement worked well throughout his long reign and brought much benefit to his son, as we shall see presently.

Conflict with the Shelloi-Langmais

The Shelloi-Langmais were probably two separate but closely allied peoples originally. But by the time we meet them in

the 6th century, they had become one by fusion. They are always spoken of as one people as the Shelloi-Langmais. They inhabited the hill to the east of Imphal now called Nongmaijing named after them.

The Shelloi-Langmais, while proceeding to invade a hill village, man-handled a servant of the king. He was watching the royal fishery. The servant reported to the king. The king and his warriors ambushed the Shelloi-Langmais when they returned joyously after the successful expedition. The fight was on the bank of a stream called the Naga, a tiny tributary of the Nambul. Only 10 persons escaped out of the whole expeditionary force.

The king's son, Hongnem Yoi Khunjao, was in love with the daughter of the chief of the Shelloi-Langmais from before this incident. When the incident took place, the prince was in her cottage on the Nongmaijing hill. Retribution fell on the innocent prince. The Shelloi-Langmais were determined to kill him. On the advice of the girl, he cut the wall of her cottage and escaped to Khuman Principality He was given asylum there. The prince of the principality gave his daughter in marriage to him. Later, he went to Moirang Principality with his father-in-law. The prince of Moirang Principality also gave his daughter in marriage to him. He stayed in Moirang for some time. He then went to Luwang Principality, stayed there and learnt statecraft from its prince.

INTERREGNUM

Hongnem Yoi Khunjao was not in good terms with his father, who expelled him from home, and probably from the kingdom also, in his youth. The old king died in 658. After this there was an interregnum of 5 years. There was a great problem of succession to the throne. The king's eldest son who should have normally succeeded on the throne was lame and was therefore excluded from succession according to the law of the Manipuris. On the other hand, Hongnem Yoi Khunjao who was free from the disability was away from the kingdom on account of the expulsion by his father.

As desired by the dowager queen, Hongnem Yoi Khunjao was now invited to return to the kingdom and ascend the throne.

There is a book entitled *Naothing Khong Phamban Kaba* (Accession of Naothing Khong) which looks like a long narrative poem, written about the 16th century, giving a detailed account of these events from the expedition of the Shelloi-Langmais upto the accession of Naothing Khong and the death of the Shelloi-Langmai chief's daughter Our account is from it.

NAOTHING KHONG

Hongnem Yoi Khunjao ascended the throne of the Ningthouja kingdom in 663 under the reign-name Naothing Khong. A well-known event of his reign was the visit of Samlung, the younger brother of the king of Pong.

The Shan kingdom of Pong was bounded on the north by the range of hills which separate India from Burma ; on the south, it extended up to the Shan kingdom of Khampat ; on the west, to the Yoma range ; on the east to Yunan [1]. As has been said earlier, its capital was at Mogaung.

The visit of Samlung

Sukanpha ascended the throne of Pong in 777 A.D. on the death of his father Murgnow Sukanpha sent his brother Samlung at the head of a powerful army to subdue the kingdoms on the east. When this was done, he sent his brother again to subdue the kingdoms on the west. While returning from western kingdoms after the expedition, he visited Manipur in 698, according to the Royal Chronicle. It does not record any fight between him and the Manipuris.

Samlung remained in Manipur for 10 years at a site on the left bank of the River Imphal opposite to Kangla and returned to his country via the source of the Irin. The place where he stayed came to be known as Apong Ingkhon (the homestead of the Pong).

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1 Dun : Gazetteer of Manipur (1886) p. 188.

The date of Samlung's visit

Colonel McCulloch, an officer of the East India Company, in his *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes* gives the year of Samlung's visit as 777, a difference of 79 years. He relied on 'a Shan account of the Shan kingdom of Pong considered authentic and quoted by Pemberton'. Richard Boileau Pemberton, whom he means, was another British officer of the East India Company who came to Manipur about 20 years prior to McCulloch's time. Shan chronicles use a cumbrous method of recording the years of the incidents while the Royal Chronicle uses the easy method of recording events in Shakabda. Without seeing the Shan chronicle relied on by Pemberton, it is difficult to give an opinion It however appears that the year of Samlung's visit cannot be 777 as his brother ascended the throne in that year and he went on an expedition to the east after that. After completing his work in the east, he went to the west. It was only after it that he came to Manipur.

The Shelloi-Langmai chief's daughter

The Shelloi-Langmai chief's daughter who saved Hongnem Yoi Khunjao's life got the news that he became the king. She came to the palace in her best clothes carrying some simple presents available in her home. When she arrived, the king was sitting in state with his two queens, one on each side. The king bade a welcome ; but seeing that he had already two wives, she decided to go away. It is believed that she died soon afterwards.

Conquest of hill villages

The principalities of the Khumans, Moirangs and the Luwangs were still remaining independent of the Ningthoujas. But the expansion of this kingdom on the west reached the limits of modern Jiribam in Naothing Khong's reign. There was a hill people called the Mangangs inhabiting the western slopes of the hill overlooking the plains of modern Cachar. Naothing Khong conquered these hill villages. For this reason, he was called the 'Conqueror of the Mangangs'.

Conquest of the Thanga-Kambongs

While returning to the capital after defeating the Mangangs, the king and his men checked their ration and found that it would be sufficient for one extra day. So instead of returning home direct, they attacked the Thanga-Kambongs, two closely allied peoples inhabiting the region of Thanga. On getting the news of the king's advance, they fled their home by boat. The king got an easy victory.

The Royal Chronicle does not record this incident ; but *Ningthourol Lambuba* does. We think that it was just a raid not leading to permanent conquest.

End of the reign

The Royal Chronicle says that he reigned 100 years. We do not find direct reference to development programmes. But his long and strong reign led to the consolidation of the Ningthouja kingdom and its expansion

Society

We have seen that kingship descended according to primogeniture, right from the time of Pakhangba to the end of the reign of Naothing Khong, except where the first born male child was excluded from succession for some disability. A group of families descended from a common ancestor is called a *sagei*. The head of a *sagei* is called *piba*. The office of the *piba* also descended according to primogeniture. This is the practice in our time also.

The clearing of woods in the reign of Khui Ningomba (Khaga Deep) must have reduced miasma by letting in more life-giving sunlight, leading to better health of the people. It also made the people safer from wild animals.

The conquest of the Mangangs by Naothing Khong shows that the power of the strong government in what is now Imphal was felt in remote hills also. It may be presumed that in the long and successful reigns of Konthouba and Naothing Khong, the traffic on the hill routes between the Surma valley and the Manipur Valley increased.

In Manipuri books written about the early half of the 10th century, there is constant reference to the practice of chewing *pan* among the people of the Surma valley and Tripura. There is reference also to traders of these areas coming to Manipur to sell conchs and cowries. Although we do not have direct reference to these traders in the time of Naophangba and his three successors, we may presume that they visited Manipur in their reigns also.

It is likely that the practice of chewing *pan* spread to Manipur also in the period under review, if not earlier.

The betel-pepper (*Piper betle*) grows well in the western part of Manipur. The areca-nut palm can grow in the Valley but do not fruit well. But this problem was solved by importing betel-nuts from the Surma Valley.

In the previous chapter we found a number of vegetables. People continued to eat them and the names also become more familiar to us.

The exclusion of Hongnem Yoi Khunjao's elder brother from succession is another point deserving consideration. This is a principle of Hindu Law, although it is not stated to be so in *Naothing Khong Phamban Kaba* in so many words. The relevant provision is given, to cite one example, in chapter 15, verse No. 32 of the Vishnu Smriti.

The principles of law given in the Vishnu Smriti were originally the laws governing the followers of the Krishna Yajur Veda called the Black Yajur Veda by Western scholars. The worshippers of Vishnu added one chapter to the beginning of this law book and another chapter to its end. In the newly added first chapter the goddess Earth goes sobbing to Vishnu and the latter says that he will promulgate the laws governing the conduct of men on earth. In the newly added last chapter goddess Earth eulogises Vishnu for promulgating the laws*. The effect of the addition is that the laws which were originally

*See *The Sacred Books Of The East* Vol. VII p. xii and p. xxvii

meant for the followers of the Krishna Yajur Veda now seem to emanate from the lips of Vishnu, the Supreme Being, thus commanding the highest respect.

Whether there were followers of the Krishna Yajur Veda among the Indo-Aryans who settled in Manipur from about the 3rd century B.C. is a moot point. We may also say that exclusion of a person from succession for being lame, though harsh to our tastes, was justified in those times.

In the latitudes of Manipur, the banana-tree grows abundantly. The poorer section of the people ate from plates of banana leaf and cups made of it. *Panthoibi Khongoon* (In Quest of Panthoibi) refers to the Manipuri practice of cultivating banana in their homestead. The Indo-Aryan settlers called the banana tree **rambhu*, from Sanskrit *rambha*, and the word became *rabhu*. But their descendants with their habit of pronouncing *ra* as *la* and *bha* as *pha* called the banana-tree *laphu*, the present Manipuri word for the banana-tree. A cup of banana leaf by folding the tips and holding them with tiny pieces of bamboo is called *dona* in Manipuri.

CHATER—VI

KHONGTEKCHA TO IRENGBA

Khongtekcha, the elder of the two sons of Naothing Khong, ascended the throne in 763. Before his time, the Luwangs had dwindled in importance. Only the Khumans and the Moirangs were remaining independent of the Ningthoujas. But it also became increasingly evident that they too remained independent only on sufferance of the Ningthoujas.

Invasion from Moirang

The Moirangs under the leadership of 63 prominent warriors invaded the kingdom of Khongtekcha. But this ended in a fiasco. The invaders were completely defeated and all the 63 prominent warriors were killed. This had a good effect. The Moirangs did not invade the Ningthouja kingdom for several centuries.

Invasion from East Bengal ?

The chronicle *Ningthouron Lambuba* records a battle between Khongtekcha and a certain Hindu king referred to as Oinu Sengba Raja in that chronicle. Obviously, Oinu Sengba is a rough translation of the name of the Raja and not his real name. According to the chronicle he was captured by Khongtekcha.

This battle is not recorded in the Royal Chronicle. But *Ningthourol Lambuba* is also of high authority although it has two main drawbacks. Firstly, it does not give the date of the incidents it records and secondly, it is written in archaic Manipuri couched in a difficult style. We do not know the

date of the battle. Since Khongtekcha reigned 10 years only, the battle took place between 763 and 773.

Dinesh Chandra Sen in his *History of Bengali Language and Literature* mentions a collection of Bengali ballads on 48. themes. On theme no 33 of the collection there are ballads describing battles between a Bengali king and the king of Manipur. The historicity of these ballads is open to question. Dinesh Chandra Sen himself groups the ballads under the title Historical Legends and Folklore. Regarding details given in these ballads, we need not take them seriously. But one fact emerges from the ballads—therewere occasional fights between kings of East Bengal and kings of Manipur

Since the expansion of the Ningthouja kingdom reached the limits of modern Jiribam in the reign of Naothing Khong, occasional fights were natural. Manipur was not a hermetically sealed region in the Indian sub-continent.

Killing tiger

Ningthourol Lambuba also refers to his killing 6 tigers in his lifetime. The Royal Chronicle is silent on this point, presumably because it considered it to be of minor importance. But killing a tiger before the days of firearms was a hazardous job requiring courage, skill and physical strength. Obviously, the tigers were killed going on tours. That is why it is recorded in *Ningthourol Lambuba* meaning 'The Account of Royal Tours.'

Copper plate

A pioneer archeologist of Manipur, Shri W. Yumjao Singh, found a copper plate at Phayeng, a village about 9 miles to the west of Imphal. He acquired it, transliterated it into Roman script and translated it into English. He published the full text in English translation in 1935 in his *Report on the Archeological Studies in Manipur* Bulletin No. 1.

The inscription leaves no room to doubt that Khongtekcha was familiar with these concepts : (1) Cycle of birth and death and (2) incarnation of gods. Hindu gods and goddesses mentioned

in the inscription are Shiva, Devi, Ganesh, Vishwa Karma and Hari

The copper plate became state property But it was lost in the Second World War We have no opportunity to study it now and give an independent opinion

Khongtekcha is called Khelananda according to the list of Sanskrit names of the kings of Manipur *Ningthourol Lambuba* makes it abundantly clear that he was of a philosophical bent of mind He loved to contemplate on gods and goddesses and tried to know the nature of soul The inscription ascribed to him is in keeping with his character delineated in the concluding lines about him in the chronicle just mentioned

Importance of his reign

The reign of Khongtekcha is important It saw growing contact between Manipur and the Surma valley and the lower Gangetic valley Eastern Mymensingh and some other parts of East Bengal were parts of the Gupta Empire The lifeline of Manipur from ancient times upto the beginning of the 20th century was through modern Cachar and Sylhet The district of Sylhet was,so to say, Manipur's western gate It was through it that most people and most ideas from the rest of India came to Manipur

Vishnu, Shiva, Devi and some other gods and goddesses rose to prominence in the time of the Imperial Guptas It is quite likely that ideas about these gods and goddesses spread to Manipur along with ideas about culture Cultural and trade contacts brought with them the threat of invasion and occasional fights But life is not all roses

A calamity

The king and all the 64 nobles went on hunting All the nobles and the retinue except one man holding a *long* (a multi-pronged spear-like weapon with spikes of bamboo tipped with iron). Since the man held a *long*, his descendants came to be known as the Longjams

The effect of the incident is that it seriously weakened the Ningthouja kingdom; because the strength of a kingdom depended to a large extent on the wisdom, courage, dexterity and the physical strength of the nobles.

INTERREGNUM

Khongtekcha died in 773. After this there was an interregnum of 11 years. We do not yet understand the nature of the long interregnum. The Royal Chronicle is silent on it. It is not the function of *Ningthourol Lambuba* to record it. Still pertinent questions arise: Who ruled during the interregnum? Did he belong to Manipur or some region outside it?

Two minor kings

In 784, Khongtekcha's son Keirencha ascended the throne ending the interregnum. We do not know much about him except that he invaded an obscure place in the Valley. He was succeeded on the throne by his son Yaraba in 799.

Yaraba was a skilled archer and marksman. He behaved well with everybody. But as a king he did not achieve much.

Ayangba

In 821, Yaraba was succeeded by his son Ayangba. His another name is shown to be Akhanda Pratap in the list of kings. His reign is memorable as it marks the beginning of the conflict between the Ningthoujas and the Khumans. It went on for some three centuries and as the ultimate result, the Khuman Principality was absorbed in the Ningthouja kingdom. In the time of Ayangba however, it was just the beginning of the conflict.

One day, some subjects of Ayangba went on hunting. The animal escaped into Khuman territory and was persued into it. The Khumans took it seriously and regarded it as violation of their territory. A battle ensued between the king and the Khumans, which resulted in the defeat of the latter. Four of their warriors were brought to Imphal as prisoners.

Ayangba was good at sports, specially long jump It was for this that he was named Ayangba The name means 'fleet of foot'.

Ayangpalli

Today he is remembered for his building a wide, straight road at the eastern extremity of the capital city It runs from Kongba Bazar to Lamlong Bazar The road was named Ayangpalli after the king The name means Ayangba's Long Bund It has been serving the people of Manipur in many ways for more than 1,000 years and is still in a good condition In Ayangba's time it was not metalled It is now an all-weather motorable road

Ayangba reigned 89 years

Ayangba's successors

Ayangba was followed by three minor kings. He was succeeded by his son Ningthoucheng who ascended the throne in 910. The only exploit of the new king recorded in the Royal Chronicle was a battle, which he won He was succeeded on the throne by his son Chenglei Ipan Lanthaba in 949 In the reign of the latter king, the Luwangs came on a small boat on the stream Luwangli They were all captured under the orders of the king The incident proves beyond doubt that the once powerful Luwangs from whose prince the future king of the Ningthoujas learnt state-craft was now completely under the authority of the Ningthoujas

Yanglou Keiphaba, Chenglei Ipan Lanthaba's son, succeeded his father on the throne in 969 His reign is memorable for introduction of a type of embroidery at the border of *phanek* (Manipuri women's lower garment) The pattern is hook-shaped and called *khoi* Yanglou Keiphaba was not his original name. One day one of his servants was attacked by a tiger at a place called Yanglou The servant wounded the tiger but was in difficulty The king personally caught the tiger So he was called Yanglou Keiphaba (the Captor of the Tiger at Yanglou). Besides this incident, a tiger was also caught at what is now the

campus of Manipur University, about 4 miles to the south of modern Raj Bhavan.

IRENGBA

Yanglou Keiphaba was succeeded on the throne by his son Irengba in 984. He engaged the Moirangs at Ithai on the bank of River Imphal and defeated them catching 10 of them alive including two prominent warriors He then defeated the Khumans at Taknakha and 20 of them were taken prisoner.

The first reference to writing

The chronicle *Ningthourol Lambuba* refers to Irengba as fond of reading and writing even in old age He reigned 90 years. This is the first reference to writing in any of the chronicles in Manipur It is therefore valuable

People write naturally in their mothertongue. Writing in a foreign language or a classical language no longer spoken requires long preparation Since we have now got a definite reference to writing and reading, we can say that Manipuri literature had come into existence.

Clothes and ornaments

Ningthourol Lambuba refers to Irengba's wearing apparel. It refers to his dhoti, shirt and a wrapper now roughly rendered into English as the shawl But it does not mention the turban The king was fond of nice clothes and put them on in a splendid way. He wore a gold bracelet on his arm and gold bangles on the wrists He also wore gold ear rings It may be remarked that upto about the end of the 18th century, men too wore gold bangles, bracelets and earrings. Wearing of gold bangles and bracelets by men singers and drumbeaters, if the ornaments were conferred by the Maharajah as a mark of distinction, continued right upto modern times

The queen wore long hair tied in a bunch on the back of the head. She covered her bosom well with clothes She wore gold rings on her finger and gold bangles on the wrists When she went on foot she was beautiful as a pea-hen.

Although the description is of the king and the queen, we can presume that it applied *mutatis mutandis* to nobles and ladies also.

Art and industry

According to *Ningthourol Lambuba* ancient Manipuris collected beeswax and honey of wild bees from the woods. They used the wax in casting objects of metal. The art of making statues of wood was known. But a better way of making statues was to make them of metal.

When Irengba died his queen, who was a daughter of the prince of the Khumans, desired to make a bust of her late husband. A hillman made a bust of the wood of coral tree *(Erythrina indica* ; Manipuri *kurao)* and dyed it with turmeric. But it was not life-like. She then told a Khuman artist to make a bust of copper with instructions to make it as life-like as possible particularly, the lips, the corners of the eyes, the cheeks and the ears. When the artist finished the bust, it was so life-like that it evoked wailing from all sections of women not excepting bashful young women.

This incident recorded in the chronicle makes it clear that in the 10th century, the Manipuris worked in copper well.

End of the ancient period

Irengba died in 1074. With the end of his reign we come to the end of the ancient period.

CHAPTER—VII

LOIYAMBA TO PURANTHABA

Loiyamba, one of the wisest and ablest kings of Manipur, ascended the throne in 1074 succeeding his father Irengba. His reign is memorable in many ways.

Division of labour

It is for his victories of peace that he is chiefly remembered in our time. If a kingdom is to be powerful and prosperous, it must have a strong economic base. So he wanted to improve the economic condition of Manipur. Agriculture was there. But agriculture alone was not sufficient. It was therefore necessary to place cottage industries on a sound footing and eliminate, as far as practicable, wasteful competition He therefore effected a division of labour among his people by an edict in 1110

He assigned a particular trade to the descendants of a proginator (*yumnak*). Thus all the *yumnaks* in his reign had their own respective occupations.

In the case of well-developed industries like handloom and dyeing, the weaving of different types of cloths was assigned to different families. Likewise, dyeing with particular dyes such as deep pink, blue, black was assigned to different families. Economists will appreciate the reform of Loiyamba ; for much of the progress in the economic field depends on Division of Labour.

What is called *shilpa* in Sanskrit is called *shil* in Manipuri. The orders of Loiyamba on the assignment of trades were

collected later on and compiled in the form of a book called *Loiyamba Shil-yen*. The word *yen* means distribution. The name of the book means Loiyamba's Distribution of Trades.

Code of conduct

The Manipuri word *shil* has a secondary meaning viz. one's business or duty. *Loiyamba Shil-yen* therefore prescribes also the code of conduct to be followed by the king, the queen, the nobility and the commoner in their dealings with one another. It also contains some protocol for the nobles, and some provisions of criminal law.

Everybody in the kingdom was to do his or her duty. Not to speak of the nobles, even the king was not above the law.

Criminal Law

Loiyamba Shil-yen gives us an idea of the society and beliefs of the Manipuri people in the eleventh century. The kingdom depended on proper rainfall and proper sunshine. But proper rainfall and proper sunshine depended on proper administration of justice by kings and judges here on earth. If justice was done on earth, there was regularity of seasons including sunshine and rainfall. So justice must be done by all, high and low. But what was the justice to be done ? What was the law to be administered ? The book then gives some provisions of criminal law.

The law given in the book is draconian. For stealing neat or a horse or a slave, the punishment prescribed was amputation of one leg. For burglary, the punishment was amputation of one hand. For those who enticed away wives of other people, the book prescribes blinding. "Those who rise in rebellion against the king", the book continues "shall be put to death without any exception".

We have seen the harshness of the law prescribed in *Loiyamba Shil-yen*. But in the 11th century, the law was draconian in other parts of India also. Take for instance the provisions in the Laws of Manu or the provisions in the Vishnu Smriti.

"He who has stolen a cow, or a horse or a camel or an elephant" says the Vishnu Smriti "shall have one hand or one foot cut off". It also says that great criminals should be put to death. According to it, those who forge royal edicts and those who are of low birth but aspire to sovereignty shall be put to death.*

The provisions in *Loiyamba Shil-yen* just mentioned are more or less on the lines prescribed in the Vishnu Smriti or the Manu Smriti for similar offences.

Rule of law

Loiyamba Shil-yen shows that no one was above Law. Even the king who was the head of the state had to submit to law. This is what we mean by rule of law. This was perfectly in keeping with Hindu views of law and justice ; for according to the Hindu view, Law is the foundation of the universe.

It would be wrong to say that Manipur had all the paraphernalia of the rule of law in the 11th century. But this little kingdom had some fore-taste of it in the reign of Loiyamba

Administrative reform

To improve the standard of administration, Loiyamba divided the Valley into 6 circles. Each circle was called a *pana*—a term destined to survive for centuries. Each *pana* sent a team of workers to work for the state The teams worked according to a fixed routine. Each team was called a *lalup*. The areas covered by the circles were changed by subsequent kings. The areas were re-defined and new names for the *panas* were coined ; but the idea of dividing the Valley into different *panas* for administrative convenience and efficiency survived kings, revolutions, foreign invasions and even occasional anarchy. It survived British Paramouncy also For introduction of the concept of *pana*, the people of Manipur are indebted to Loiyamba

*See author's HML.

Those who worked in the *lalup* were paid nothing. On account of this the majority of English writers described it as forced labour. But it may be very properly regarded as a form of tax—a tax paid in the form of services instead of money. Payment of tax in kind was the order of the day. Payment of tax in service was a special feature of the Manipuris.

Hills and the Valley unified

By the time of Loiyamba it is clear that the domain of the Ningthouja kings included most of the hills now comprised in the State of Manipur. In the reign of Loiyamba we find the king or his officers going to the hills to realise tributes[1]. Tributes were paid in terms of cloths and other products of the hills[2]. It was the obligation of the hill-chiefs to provide food-stuffs to the king's officers if sent to realise tributes. On one occasion, a certain hill-chief failed to provide food to the king's officers. The king went in person in an expedition and punished the chief[3].

Control of Sekta

Sekta on the River Irin was a colony dependent on the Ningthoujas. The extent of the colony is not yet determined. But we do not doubt that the neighbouring villages also were parts of the colony. In Loiyamba's time, it once defaulted payment of tribute. So the king sent an expedition. The colony was subdued and tribute was realised.

Both the Royal Chronicle and *Ningthourol Lambuba* mention this incident. This is the earliest reference to Sekta in the chronicles.

Estimate of Loiyamba's reign

Loiyamba was one of the makers of Manipur. Some of the features of the economic order prevalent upto 1891 took root in his reign. He was a great reformer. Reformation is a difficult work specially for those, who by nature lack tact or

1, 2 and 3. NL.

are over-zealous. It is a great tribute to Loiyamba that his reforms were carried out peacefully. He died in 1122 after a successful reign of 48 years.

With the accession of Loiyamba, we come to medieval period of the history of Manipur. Sweeping changes took place in North India in and after his reign. The Muslims conquered North India bit by bit. The Muslim conquest reached Bengal in the 12th century.

To the east of Manipur, the Shans remained as a powerful people. They were much more numerous than the Manipuris and occupied far more extensive territory.

Political changes in the rest of India and Upper Burma strongly influenced the course of history in Manipur.

LOITONGBA

Loiyamba's son Loitongba succeeded his father in 1122. We may mention here an incident which took place during his his childhood.

Reference to a Bengali village

The chronicle *Ningthourol Lambuba* gives a short account of his playful boyhood days, long before his accession. Sometimes he played with seeds of cacoon (Manipuri *kangkhin*). On another occasion, he played with a top fetched by servants of the royal household from a village of the Bengalis of East Bengal situated in the western part of the Manipur Valley.

This reference in the beginning of the 12th century is the earliest reference to the Bengalis in the chronicles.

Indoor game of *kang*

Loitongba had some military successes ; but it is for introluction of the Manipuri indoor game of *kang* that his reign is emembered now.

In this game players try to hit targets placed many feet way by throwing circular objects made of ivory or elliptical bjects made of lac. These objects are called *kang*, from

which the game is named. Each team consists of 7 players If a team hits two targets, it is entitled to send an elliptical *kang* gliding on the floor made smooth by dusting The aim is to knock down another elliptical *kang* fixed many feet away perpendicular to the floor. If the perpendicular *kang* is knocked down properly, one goal is scored.

A team may consist wholly of men or of men and women. Youths and unmarried girls also may join. The game was played in summer only.

Descendants of Loitongba

Loitongba had three sons. The Loitongbams among the Manipuris are descended from the youngest prince.

ATOM YOIREMBA

Atom Yoiremba succeeded his father Loitongba in 1150. In the 13th year of his reign, his younger brother Iwan Thaba drove him out and ascended the throne. This is the first instance, in the history of Manipur, of a brother usurping the throne from a reigning brother. The inequity is all the more glaring because of the fact that the king was Iwan Thaba's own brother by the same parents But more of such instances in the 18th and the 19th centuries

As for Atom Yoiremba he fled the kingdom by boat and reached the capital of Khuman Principality The prince offered him help to regain his throne, which he declined, Instead, he sought asylum, which was granted He never regained his kingdom.

Details of the *coup d'etat*

Details of the *coup d'etat* ousting the king are interesting. Iwan Thaba was handsome. He spent his youth in Khuman Principality which served him as the spring-board. Young women of the principality called him Hemdou Iwan Thaba (Middle Manipuri *hemdou* handsome). A noble of the Khuman clan helped him to seize the throne. The relevant passage of *Ningthourol Lambuba* is not clear whether Iwan Thaba himself

formed the idea or the noble egged him on. The king of the Ningthoujas Atom Yoiremba got wrong intelligence. His information was that the Khuman prince himself was helping Iwan Thaba.

Iwan Thaba came from Khuman Principality and, according to a secret plan, ascended the throne in the presence of some nobles. It is curious that Atom Yoiremba fled quietly by boat without fighting.

IWAN THABA

He ascended the throne in 1163. One of his first acts after becoming the king was to invade Khuman Principality.

Cause of the conflict

While hunting, Iwan Thaba wounded a deer by hurling his spear ; but the animal escaped to Khuman territory with the spear embedded in its body. The king sent a message to the Khuman prince to return the spear. The prince returned it slightly damaged. This led to the invasion.

Outcome

The king engaged the Khumans at Uchiwa on the bank of the River Imphal. The invaders killed the wife of the Khuman prince while she was inspecting agricultural operations. To avenge her death, the Khumans invaded Ningthouja kingdom. In the ensuing battle, the Khumans were completely defeated. Thirty Khuman warriors were caught alive and the rest were either killed or driven away.

The killing of the Khuman prince's wife was neither heroic nor chivalrous. It was an irresponsible exercise of power. To settle the issue arising out of her death, a certain Khuman challenged the king to a duel. To accept the challenge would be chivalrous ; but duelling might prove fatal to the king. So he manoeuvered to turn the issue into a battle. Of course, in a regular battle the Ningthouja kingdom of this time was no match for the Khumans. So the king won it.

THAWAN THABA

Iwan Thaba died after reigning 32 years. His son Thawan Thaba succeeded him in 1195. His reign is memorable for further integration of Manipur.

One of the first acts of the new king was consolidation of hill villages. He sent an expedition to the villages of a hill people called the Chingsongs. It was successful. Then he proceeded in person to another hill village and defeated the chief. In his reign some six expeditions were sent to different hills. The power of the king was felt nicely in the hills helping maintenance of peace in the hill areas, which was conducive to the interest of the hill peoples. This also helped the progress of Manipur as a whole.

Further expansion of Ningthouja power

We have been closely following the expansion of Ningthouja or Mitei power since the formation of their nucleus at Kangla (modern cantonment of the Assam Rifles) in 33 A.D. The expansion was carried one step further by greatly weakening the Khumans.

The Khumans invited the king to join them in their fight against the Heirem Khunjans, two allied peoples who had become one, living to the south of Khuman Principality. The king accepted the invitation and his army proceeded on boat. The combined forces of the Ningthoujas and the Khumans defeated the Heirem Khunjans.

The alliance between the Ningthoujas and the Khumans was short-lived. The king invaded Khuman Principality. The ensuing battle was decisive. The Khumans were completely defeated and their power was crushed. But the principality was not annexed. This fight is narrated in a book called *Thawan Thaba Hiran* (Thawan Thaba's Naval Battle). The word *hi* means boat and *ran*, battle.

Princess from the west

Another event, not so well-known but important from the cultural point of view, was the marriage of Thawan Thaba with

a westerner princess from beyond the border of Manipur. We do not know her original name ; but the people of Manipur called her Chingurembi. This was a translation of the original name, which must have been in Sanskrit or Bengali meaning the great goddess or the supreme goddess.

The coming of Chingurembi as the wife of the Manipuri king is one of early notable contacts between Manipur and the rest of eastern India. She came with a large number of attendants to settle permanently in Manipur. Most of them seem to be Vaishyas and Shudras. The coming of her attendants and the absorption of most of them in Manipuri families (*yumnaks*) is kept in a very short book called *Chingurembi Khonglup* (Those who came with Chingurembi). Among her attendants there were : (1) a personal attendant named Lakhi Naral (Lakshmi Narayan) (2) an attendant named Ram Naral (Ram Narayan) (3) a man named Lokhon Tas (Lakshman Das) (4) an elephantdriver named Tulasi Ram (5) a dyer also named Tulasi Ram (6) a goldsmith named Hari (7) a groom named Hari Naral (Hari Narayan) (8) a man named Tapa to keep the hearth (9) a cow-herd named Akhul Tao and (10) a fisherman named Kathau*.

A careful scrutiny of the names of her attendants reveals that all of them except the last three were Hindus. The name of the hearth-keeper does not indicate his religion The cow-herd and the fisherman seem to be non-Hindus Besides, the Hindu names indicate (it must be emphasised that the indication is not conclusive) that the Hindu attendants were of Vaishnavite persuation.

Effect of the marriage

The marriage conclusively proves that there was cultural contact between Manipur and the Surma-Gangetic valley in the 12th and the 13th centuries also. The marriage was a factor fostering this contact. Her marriage must have assisted the people of eastern India to form clearer ideas about Manipur.

*From *Chingurembi Khonglup*

TWO MINOR KINGS

Thawan Thaba died after a reign of 36 years. He was followed by two minor kings. He was succeeded by his son Chingthang Lanthaba (1231-1242) who again attacked the Khumans. Chingthang Lanthaba was succeeded by his son Thingbai Selhongba (1242-1247).

PURAN THABA

Thingbai Selhongba was succeeded by his brother Puran Thaba in 1247. His reign may be noted for the final defeat of the Khumans.

Fight with the Khumans

Before Puran Thaba's time, Khuman Principality became dependent on the Ningthouja kingdom paying tribute in money. Puran Thaba sent an officer to give the Khuman prince a certain wrong information about the Shelloi Langmais. The Khumans made extensive preparations to invade the village of the Shelloi Langmais. Puran Thaba got correct intelligence and proceeded with a large army to a lake called Poirou situated near the village of the Shelloi Langmais.

The Khumans came to attack the Shelloi Langmais; but when they reached Poirou, the Ningthouja army engaged them and got a decisive victory. Puranthaba's strategy was to bring the Khumans to bay using machiavellian means. We will see in a subsequent chapter its long-term effect.

Inner working of the Ningthouja state

The state employed spies. It also had officials called *lambus*, experts in the affairs of the neighbouring principalities. In the present case, how did the king get intelligence of Khuman plans? The Khuman *lambu* chanced to see a Khuman woman washing rice in a stream. He drew her out and she let the cat out of the bag.

CHAPTER—VIII

KHUMOMBA TO NINGTHOU KHOMBA

Khumomba, younger brother of Puran Thaba, now became the king of Manipur in 1263. King Chingthang Lanthaba, had three sons—Thingbai Selhongba, Puran Thaba and Khumomba. Thingbai Selhongba succeeded his father as we have seen. It appears that he left no son. Puran Thaba succeeded his brother as we have seen. He left two sons and yet he was succeeded by his brother. The circumstances in which he was succeeded by his brother are not yet understood.

A new phase

With the reign of Khumomba we enter an entirely new phase of the history of Manipur. We saw in a previous chapter that with the accession of Sameirang in 518, the history of Manipur entered a new phase. The Ningthoujas embarked on a policy of conquering and absorbing the principalities of other clans. What was a dream in 518 became, practically, an accomplished fact by the end of the 12th century when the Khuman Principality accepted the suzerainty of the Ningthouja kingdom by paying an annual tribute in money. Only Moirang Principality remained independent. All other principalities were now either absorbed in or dependent on the Ningthouja kingdom. In the case of Moirang also, the Moirangs were defeated whenever and wherever they fought against the Ningthoujas, also called the Miteis. As a matter of policy, the

Ningthouja kings left the Moirangs, for the time being, to themselves in their small, somewhat secluded principality hemmed in by the wide lake Logtag on one side and wooded hills on the other.

Exercise of suzerainty over Khuman Principality brought new obligations. Accepting tributes from the principality brought with it the obligation to protect it from outside aggression. The Kabaws, a branch of the Shans, were a rich and powerful people at this time The obligation to protect Khuman Principality against the Kabaws now devolved on the Ningthouja king who was now virtually the king of Manipur.

From the time of Khumomba onwards we find the Manipuris measuring arms against the peoples of Burma This went on for about five and a half centuries

In 518 the Ningthouja kingdom began the policy of conquering and absorbing the principalities in the Manipur valley. After integrating nearly the whole of Manipur, the king of Manipur from 1263 looked beyond the hills dividing India from Burma.

War with the Kabaws

In the reign of Khumomba, the Kabaws invaded Khuman Principality and advanced upto the lake Ikop The prince requested Khumomba, the Ningthouja king, to repulse the invaders and protect the principality

The king's army engaged the Kabaws on the shore of Ikop. According to *Ningthourol Lambuba*, the king, sword in hand and riding his horse, led his army and fought furiously in the battlefield. The custom of the Ningthoujas at this time was that whenever a foreign power invaded Manipur, the king himself must lead the army.

The king's army was assisted by the Khumans and the Moirangs. The Kabaws could not withstand the well-directed attack of the king's army and their troops were in disarray. The Manipuris won the war. According to the Royal Chronicle,

many were taken prisoner including a chief who 'ate from plates of gold and drank water from vessels of silver'.

Effect of the war

Khuman Principality at this time comprised not only the Valley areas but also most hills inhabited by the Marings and the Taraos and some of the hills inhabited by the Tangkhuls. If the Kabaws overran the principality, it might lead to its dismemberment. The timely intervention by the Ningthouja king averted this danger. Khuman principality remained intact.

Other successes

Khumomba had some minor military successes also. He brought some more hill areas under the domain of Ningthouja kings. Among his successes we may also mention his victory over the chief of the Thangals inhabiting a range of hills to the north.

Khumomba died after a short but successful reign of 15 years.

MOIRAMBA

When Khumomba died, the throne passed to his heir. He was succeeded by the elder of his two sons, Moiramba, in 1278.

There was a minor battle with the Khumans at a place called Leitang near Mayang Imphal, the capital of Khuman Principality. A couple of the principality was taken prisoner. The main event of his reign was the victory over the Moirangs. The king's army engaged and defeated the Moirangs at a place called Ningthou Khong and returned with many prisoners. Moiramba was not the personal name of the king. 'Moiramba' means 'the Conqueror of Moirang'. He assumed the name after this incident as a reign-name. His another name is said to be Sthira Bhadra.

The king's army successfully fought also with a hill village called Maki near the source of the Maku river. The king reigned 24 years

THANGBI LANTHABA

Moiramba's queen was from the Angom clan He had only one child. He was named Thangbi Lanthaba The latter succeeded his father on the throne in 1302 His reign is of some importance It saw further consolidation of Manipur.

Integration of Maring hills

In the south-eastern corner of the present day Manipur, there are the hills inhabited by the Marings These hills were in Khuman Principality But in the 14th century, the Marings inhabited some hills due east of Imphal They lived contiguous to the areas inhabited by the Chengleis Now, it was the turn of the latter Marings to be integrated with the rest of Manipur Thangbi Lanthaba invaded their hills and got an easy victory This extended the domain of the Ningthoujas to the border of the Kabaw Valley

Fight with the Moirangs

Another important event of his reign was his marriage with Yoiren Tompokpi, daughter of the prince of Moirang Principality, Chingkhu Telheiba He sent an envoy to the prince to ask for her hand. The prince refused The envoy kept cool and left the capital of the principality The prince's daughter heard everything. She met the envoy secretly and passed on a secret information. Her father was preparing for a battle with the Ningthoujas and it would take 5 days more. She entreated him to request the king to invade Moirang before the 5 days, before the preparation was complete

On the report of the envoy, the king invaded Moirang at the waterfront A naval battle ensued on the waters of Logtag. The Miteis (also called the Ningthoujas) won and a large number of Moirang warriors were taken prisoner

Yoiren Tompokpi was brought to the capital. She became the principal queen.

Causes of Ningthouja victory

The king invaded Moirang before the prince was ready. Secondly, the selection of the waterfront as the point of invasion was a superb strategy. The people of Moirang were fine rowers. They thought that the Miteis were their inferiors in oarsmanship. Therefore they thought that the Miteis would invade Moirang by land. So the militia of Moirang was concentrated on the land route to the neglect of the waterfront. The invasion by boat took the Moirangs by surprise. Thirdly, the Miteis had better organisation. Their army was ready at a moment's notice.

Marriage by capture

Yoiren Tompokpi's marriage is an instance of marriage by capture. But there was the redeeming feature that she was willing. Defeat of her father in the open battle and marrying her did not reflect on the king. Battles were in those days arguments of kings

Other events

The king also had a fight with the chief of a hill called Sekku situated to the south of the capital.

Thangbi Lanthaba reigned 22 years and died in 1324

KONGYAMBA

King Puran Thaba had two sons—Sana Ahongba and Sana Rok. Sana Ahongba now ascended the throne in 1324. In the chronicles, he is referred to as Kongyamba, the reign-name he assumed after a victory, as we shall see presently.

Fight with the chief of Kongyang

The king Sana Ahongba fought the chief of Kongyang Phai. In the dialect of western hills, *phai* means a small valley. Since he defeated the chief of Kongyang, he was called Kong-yamba meaning 'Kongyang's Conqueror'. This seems to be a coronation battle i.e. a battle fought on the eve of the coronation of a Manipuri king for an achievement.

A suitable reign-name was chosen by the *pundits* after the achievement.

Invasion from beyond the western hills

In the reign of Kongyamba also, there was an invasion from beyond the western hills. In the reign of Khongtekcha (763-773), there was such an invasion. That is the first recorded invasion of Manipur from the Surma-Gangetic valley. The invasion in the time of Kongyamba is the second invasion from that side.

According to the Royal Chronicle, the Manipuris defeated the invaders and a certain Rajah, recorded as Aphe Raja in the chronicle, and his physician who kept long hair were taken prisoner. According to the chronicle, Aphe Rajah stabbed vigorously with his sword. Along with the Rajah, some so-called low-caste people were also taken prisoner. The identity of these invaders has not yet been determined.

The battlefield was at the foot of a hill called Kouba Hinglen, to the north-west of Imphal. We shall see in a subsequent chapter another invasion from beyond the western hills fought near this place.

Fight with the Chakpas

The Chakpas are a people living in Manipur from before the accession of Pakhangba in 33 A.D. King Kongyamba fought with them at a place now called Bishnupur but called at that time Lamlangtong. The nature of this fight is not yet propely understood.

Name of the king

We have seen above that before the king was called Kongyamba, he was called Sana Ahongba ('Plenty of Gold'). We have also seen the literal meaning of Kongyamba. In a genealogy of the kings of Manipur, his Sanskrit name is shown as Ananda.

The king's sons

Kongyamba's queen was from Angom clan. He had two sons Telheiba and Tonaba by her.

TELHEIBA

Kongyamba died after a reign of 11 years. Telheiba succeeded him on the throne in 1335.

Control of the Heirem Khunjans

The most important event of Telheiba's reign is the control of the Heirem Khunjans and bringing their areas firmly within the domain of the power at Kangla. We came across them in the reign of Thawan Thaba (1195-1231). At that time, Khuman Principality was independent but finding it difficult to control the refractory Heirem Khunjans inhabiting the southern extremity of the Valley requested Thawan Thaba for help. We have seen the result in a previous chapter.

After Khuman Principality became a dependency of the Ningthoujas, the obligation of controlling the Heirem Khunjans devolved on the Ningthoujas. The credit of finally reducing them to submission goes to Telheiba (the name means 'the Good Archer') The king and his army proceeded on long boats and encamped one night in the territory of the Heirem Khunjans. *Ningthourol Lambuba* says that *Stolonifera javanica* also called *Stolonifera bengalensis* (Manipuri *kompreg*), cultivated now in ponds but a semi-wild vegetable then, grew profusely at the site where Telheiba encamped.

The Heirem Khunjans were reduced to submission without much difficulty. Three leaders among them were taken prisoner The Royal Chronicle gives their names but we do not reproduce them here at this distance of time.

End of the reign

Telheiba, whose Sanskrit name is said to be Sudarshan, had other successes notably on the range of the Koubru hill. He died in 1355 after an eventful reign of 20 years.

Minor kings

Telheiba was succeeded by his younger brother Tonaba (1355-1359) The latter was succeeded by Tabungba (1359-1394), a son of Telheiba. Tabungba had many successful hill expeditions to his credit. While touring the northern hills in Maram area, a hill-chief killed him for a personal grudge. Before his end, he sent two messengers to the capital to give to his queen the news of the coming event. He was succeeded by his son Lairenba (1394-1399). Lairenba died without issue. After him there was an interregnum of 5 years.

PUNSIBA

Punsiba, Lairenba's younger brother, ascended the throne in 1404. Since Lairenba died without issue, Punsiba as the only surviving son of Tabungba should have come to the throne without any difficulty What prevented him ? Was there a war of succession ? Was the kingdom everrun by foreign powers ? The Royal Chronicle as usual is silent on this point.

Punsiba's first act as the king was to invade Moirang Principality. After his success there, he fought with the Thanga-Kambongs which too was successful After this he turned his attention to the hills He fought with the Tangkhuls of Monthou, the Koirengs of Koubru and the Marings of the south-eastern hills. All these expeditions were successful.

The king's name Punsiba means the 'Long-lived Man'. He reigned 28 years. He consolidated the south-western, the north-western, the north-eastern and the south-eastern corners of Manipur. It is reasonable to expect that peace had already reigned in the central portion of Manipur.

NINGTHOU KHOMBA

Ningthou Khomba, Punsiba's son, succeeded his father in 1432. He was a worthy son of a worthy father.

Invasion of Moirang Principality

We have seen that out of the 7 principalities, only Moirang was remaining independent. This was so inspite of the many

victories the Mities (the Ningthoujas) had over this principality. It was now the turn of Moirang to fall in line with the rest of Manipur.

Ningthou Khomba, also called Shreepati in a genealogy of the Ningthouja kings, invaded Moirang with a strong force assisted by, among others, an Angom hero, Yaiskul Lakpa and Tumu Lanjingba. Moirang was completely defeated. *Ningthourol Lambuba* says that the Moirangs gave the king a bag of *leishang* (a kind of flower) as tribute. He brought 10 prisoners to Imphal. A big mound was built at Yaiskul and the place came to be known as Moirangkhom. It is quite near modern Old Secretariat.

Expedition to a Shan principality

In 1443, the king went on an expedition to a Shan Principality called Akla. His queens and other ladies of the palace were evacuated to a village called Tangkham. The expedition was crowned with success. The prince of the Shan principality was rich. He had many elephants. After defeating him, the king returned home joyously.

Raid by the Tangkhuls

While the king was away on his expedition to Akla, the the Tangkhuls of the north-eastern hills led by their chief, launched an attack against Tangkham. They were taking advantage of the absence of the king. It appears from the wording of *Ningthourol Lambuba* that their primary purpose was to plunder. But the queen Linthoi Ngambi was quick to rise to the occasion. She put on the royal male dress, quickly tied her long hair in a bunch on the crown of the head and put on the turban of her husband. This served the double purpose of hiding her long hair and personating the king. Other queens and lesser wives of the king too put on male dress.

Taking the airs of the king, Linthoi Ngambi questioned the Tangkhul chief, probably through the palace guards, why he did not render help to the king in the expedition to Akla

'from which he had just returned'—a help which he, as a hill-chief owing allegiance to the king, had to render. The Tangkhuls were utterly taken aback. They did not hope to defeat the king in a pitched battle near the capital. They merely wished to take advantage of the king's absence. But surely, the 'king' was there. So they prayed to be excused.

The 'king' gave orders to entertain the Tangkhuls with wine. According to *Ningthourol Lambuba*, two kinds of wine were served—a very strong wine and a milder kind sweet in taste. The wines were served so liberally and they drank so much that they could not even stand properly. At this stage. under the orders of the 'king' they were arrested. The stratagem of the queen saved the situation.

Not long after, the real king arrived from the victorious expedition. There was much rejoicing in the capital.

Birth of a son

In the same year, the king got a son by his queen Linthoi Ngambi. We shall find in the next chapter that this boy succeeded his father on the throne and ruled Manipur wisely for a long time.

Immigrants from the east and west

In this reign, 4 persons from the Kabaw Valley settled in Manipur. Their descendants became Manipuris.

A man named Dharma Rai came via Tripura and settled in Manipur in this reign. He and his descendants for some generations remained distinct from the Manipuris. But his descendant Madhab Rai became a Manipuri and was assigned a Maniputi surname *(yumnak)* in 1570,several reigns afterwards.

Assessment of Ningthou Khomba's reign

Ningthou Khomba's (Shreepati's) conquest of Moirang completed the process of consolidation of Manipur begun in 518. Manipur was not a large kingdom ; but on account of the difficult terrain, a large number of distinct peoples inhabited

the comparatively small area. When we say difficult terrain, we must not think of the numerous hills only. Lakes and swamps also were very numerous. The different peoples had the natural tendency to coalesce.. Allied peoples tended to become one. The Shelloi-Langmais, the Chairen-Khendes and the Heirem-Khunjans are instances in point.

We have been following the thread of development. A nucleus of power was established at Kangla in 33 A.D. Its foundation was made very strong. Then draining marshes and over-sized lakes, the River Imphal was developed as the artery of communication. This artery river helped greatly the process of conquering and absorbing Khuman Principality, Moirang Principality and the Heirem-Khunjans.

A less well-known fact of this reign is the bringing of the hills inhabited by the Taraos, a small hill-community now but a more numerous people then, firmly within the all- Manipur framework. When the Khumans were strong, the Taraos owed allegiance to them. But when the principality became a dependency, the Ningthoujas stepped into their shoes. Ningthou Khomba's expedition to the hills of the Taraos should be seen in this light. We shall see in a subsequent chapter that protection of the interests of the Taraos was one of the main reasons why the king of Manipur invaded the capital of Burma and devastated Burmese towns and villages.

From the time of Shreepati (Ningthou Khomba) Manipur was poised for the conquest of the Kabaw Valley—the valley between the present Indo-Burma border and the River Chindwin called the Ningthee by the Manipuris. Khumomba (1263-1278) repulsed a Shan (Kabaw) invasion of Khuman Principality. It was defensive. From the time of Shreepati, the Manipuris took the offensive. While returning from Moirang, he met with the chief of Tumu (now a town on the Burmese side of the Indo-Burma border but a Shan principality at that time) and took him prisoner easily. This was a straw in the wind.

His conquest of the Kabaw principality of Akla was the precursor of Manipur's conquest of the Kabaw Valley, which we shall see in the next chapter

Weapons

In the period covered by this chapter (1263-1467), the weapon of the Tangkhuls was the spear *Ningthourol Lambuba* notices that before attack, they leaped with their spears. We get no reference to the weapons of the Thangals, the Marings and the Taraos

The Ningthoujas or the Miteis used bows and arrows, spears swords and shields Dexterity in the use of bows and arrows and marksmanship were highly prized Bows and arrows were the long-range weapons of those days Spears were medium-range weapons Swords and shields were for hand to hand fighting The comparative diversity of weapons was one of the factors which enabled the power at Kangla to consolidate entire Manipur and subdue Shan principalities in the Kabaw Valley

End of an epoch

1074 marked the gradual ascendency of Shan influence on the culture of the people of Manipur Valley The trend continued upto about 1469 But this reign saw that the supposedly powerful Shans could be defeated This discovery opened up a new horizon and led to Manipuri inroads into Shan principalities and kingdoms in the Kabaw Valley. With the end of Ningthou Khomba's reign, ends the ascendency of Shan influence From 1470 in the next reign we will find a new epoch beginning

CHAPTER—IX

KYAMBA

Thangwai Ningthouba, the elder of the two sons of Ningthou Khomba ascended the throne in 1467. He assumed the reign-name Kyamba meaning the Conqueror of Kyang—a Shan kingdom in the Kabaw Valley, as we shall see presently.

Conquest of Kyang

It was the ambition of the Manipuri king to conquer Kyang or Kyang Khambat situated in the middle portion of the Kabaw Valley

In 1470, the king of Manipur and his ally the king of Pong conquered Kyang The two kings celebrated their victory with great pomp According to the Royal Chronicle, they built a bridge of silver over the river 600 feet wide, ceremoniously crossed it, sat on chairs of gold placed on a mat of gold There may be some hyperbole , but the account shows the joy of the victors and the pomp of the celebration. The two kings ate together from a plate of gold and drank water from the same vessel of gold.

As a souvenir of their victory and as a mark of their friendship, the two kings exchanged their servants. The king of Pong gave his flute-player to the Manipuri king and the latter gave his drum-beater to the king of Pong. The drum-beater was from Sekta. The two kings then concluded a friendly treaty fixing the common boundary between Manipur and Pong.

The two kings asked each other's age. The king of Pong replied that he was 47 and had been reigning 30 years. The Manipuri king replied that he was 27 and had been on the throne for 3 years. They exchanged presents and returned to their respective kingdoms. Among the presents given by the king of Pong, there was a little image of Vishnu.

The Treaty of 1470

The Treaty of 1470 concluded between Manipur and Pong is of some importance. It fixed the boundary of the domain of Manipur on the north-east, east and south. According to the Treaty, the boundary on the north was Mungkhong-mung ; to the east, Loijiri Hills ; to the south, the hill called Miya Tong. Regarding Samjok (Thaungdoot), the eastern portion fell in the share of Pong and the western portion, in the share of Manipur. The Manipuris thus got a very large part of the Kabaw Valley.

Dr Robert Brown in his *Statistical Account of Manipur* says that after the battle, the kingdom of Kyang was handed over to Manipur. At any rate, the Manipuris got by far the greater share.

Invasion from the west

In 1504, there was an invasion from the direction of the Cachar district of Assam. The invasion was by a people known to the Manipuris as the Mayangs (westerner Hindus). Kyamba sent a noble to repel the invaders. This being unsuccessful, the king sent his own son Nongthonba with a strong force to reinforce the Manipuri army. Among those who went with Nongthonba were Abujam Haoba, Wangkheirakpam Kongyamba, Kambam Sekmu and Hijam Haoba. All the warriors of Yaiskul joined the expedition.

The prince, Nongthonba, sharply rebuked the noble for failing to drive out the invaders. But inspite of the rebuke, the noble fully co-operated with the prince. The invaders were completely routed.

The Manipuris arranged the severed heads of the killed invaders into two heaps, probably for counting the number of the killed for purposes of record. The Royal Chronicle gives the names of 3 prominent invaders caught in the battle. But Prince Nongthonba the hero of the battle did not survive long the victory. He died the next year in 1505.

The identity of the invaders remains to be determined. Were they the Koches ? According to accounts prevalent outside Manipur Nara Narayan, the Koch king, realised tributes from many kingdoms including Manipur and died in 1584 after a long reign. But there is no such thing in the records of Manipur.

The Royal Chronicle was improved in 1485 and it attained a high degree of perfection. If the conquest of Manipur by Nara Narayanw ere a fact, there is no reason why the Royal Chronicle would not record it.

Improvement in administration

In 1487, Kyamba organised the revenue circles called the Ahallup Pana and Naharup Pana. These revenue circles still survive with some modifications.

Reformation in keeping the chronicle

A great part of this book is from the Royal Chronicle, *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. It begins in 33 A.D. and was written from time to time like a diary by *pundits* maintained by the state. Kyamba greatly improved it. Before his time, the chronicle simply says that in such and such year, so and so ascended the throne and reigned for such and such length of time. Only two or three most important events in a reign used to be recorded and that also, without the year of the event. The failure of the chronicle to mention the date of the event is a serious drawback. From the time of Kyamba, events were recorded with years. The entries are more numerous and give more details.

From the standpoint of history, it is difficult to over-estimate Kyamba's reform The burden of the scholar writing the history of Manipur becomes much more lightened from 1485, the year of chronicle reform

The festival of Cheiraoba

Cheiraoba is a Manipuri festival marking the end of the year. Before 1485, the Manipuris had an interesting practice Every year on its last day, the king's servants went about the highways, lanes and bye-lanes and proclaimed that the year was drawing to an end They held *khok* (a species of bamboo, tall and slender) sticks kept unhewn at the top, to which little bells were fastened and announced loudly that the year was coming to an end that day The practice of proclamation through bellmen gave the name Cheiraoba to the merry festival held on that day (from *chei* stick , *laoba* or its variant *raoba* to shout)

The practice of proclaiming the end of the year in this way arose from the necessity of following a uniform calendar throughout the dominion of the Ningthouja kings From the wording of the imprecation of Cheithaba (see the next rubric), we believe that it was Pakhangba (33 A D —?) who introduced this practice The common man in the first and the second centuries A D could not be expected to know the intricacies of reckoning the calendar By 1484, the practice became an anachronism , in the intervening period of about fourteen hundred years, the common people had learnt the reckoning of the year. So in 1485, Kyamba abolished the practice of proclamation through bellmen with the stick In its place, he introduced a new practice. But the festival at the end of the year continued to be called Cheiraoba

The institution of cheithaba

The practice introduced by Kyamba became an institution—the institution of cheithaba which played an important part in the cultural life of the people of Manipur till 1960's

In this practice on the last day of the year, there was an august assembly at the palace of the king. There in the presence of the king and the nobles a man imprecated on himself all the misfortune that might befall the king in the following year. The man was called a *cheithaba* or one has given up the stick.

After the imprecation, the man was given a reward of cloths and some basketfuls of salt. He was exempted from onerous duties to the state. The year in which he was the *cheithaba* was known as his year. Thus if a man named Khoiri Yatra was the *cheithaba* in a given year, say 1493-94, that year would be called Khoiri Yatra's year.

Why was the last day of the year proclaimed ?

Among the Romans, the first day of each month was proclaimed. It was called calends from a Greek word meaning to call. The Manipuri month is lunar. The new moon i.e. the day on which the moon is in conjunction with the sun and is therefore invisible in sky at night is the last day of the month. The day following it i.e. the first day of the bright fortnight is the first day of the Manipuri month*. It was therefore not necessary to proclaim the beginning of the month. But the Manipuri year is luni-solar. So on what day a given year ends may be a matter of much learned (and useless) controversy. So it was thought necessary to proclaim the end of the year.

Immigration of Brahmins

From the time of Kyamba onwards, we find a new feature of the history of Manipur. It is the immigration of Brahmins in almost every reign in small batches from almost all parts of North India. The Brahmins settled permanently in Manipur and became Manipuris. The account of the Brahmins who permanently settled in Manipur from the time of Kyamba

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*For *amanta* and *purnimanta* modes of reckoning the month, and further reading see author's HML.

onwards is kept in a book called *Bamon Khunthog* meaning the Immigration of Brahmins (from *Bamon*, Brahmin ; *khunthog*, immigration)

The forefathers of the Manipuri Brahmins having the family names (1) Adhikarimayum (2) Sija Gurumayum (3) Leihao-thabam (4) Takhen Changbam (5) Phurailatpam came and settled in Manipur in Kyamba's reign The Adhikarimayums came from Kharadaha (West Bengal), the Sija Gurumayums, from Gujarat, the Leihao Thabams, from Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh) ; the Takhen Changbams from Sylhet and the Phurailatpams from Nanda Gram (Uttar Pradesh)

Arrival of the Lairik-yengbams

The forefathers of the present Lairik-yengbams, a section of Manipuris, began to arrive in Kyamba's reign[2] They were Hindus and like the Brahmins noticed above, became Manipuris *Lairik-yengbam* means 'readers' They served the kingdom as writers and keepers of records Some of them distinguished themselves as scribes to the king

Worship of Vishnu

A most important event of Kyamba's reign is the beginning of the worship of Vishnu in this distant kingdom on the eastern frontier of India The king of Pong who concluded the Treaty of 1470 with Kyamba was Choupha Khek Khomba, *choupha* meaning the Rajah We saw above that he presented a little image of Vishnu

According to a pioneer historian of Manipur[3] the image of Vishnu originally belonged to Manipur and that it was lost in the reign of Shreepati (Ningthou Khomba) We have not so far got any evidence of the kind

Some Brahmins well-acquainted with the worship of Vishnu were already in Manipur Kyamba requisitioned the service of one such Brahmin and began the regular worship of Vishnu in 1470.

2. See Atombapu Vidya Ratna :*Pakhangba* p 113.
3. Mutua Jhulon : *Vijay Panchalee* pp : 61-62.

Descendants of the Brahmin who performed the first worship of Vishnu are still living They are called Aribams ('the ancient family') According to their written family accounts, *kirtan* (devotional song) was sung at the worship to the accompaniment of the cymbal and the drum. According to tradition, rice cooked in milk with sugar (Manipuri *ksheer*) was offered with leaves of *Ocimum sanctum* (Manipuri *tulasi*).

It appears from available records that the Manipuri Brahmins called the Aribams and the Phurailatpams are descended from one and the same ancestor The family name Phurailatpam is interesting It points unmistakably to the Pong origin of the image of Vishnu worshipped by Kyamba The Brahmins to whom the regular worship of Vishnu was entrusted came to be known as the Phurailatpams In the Shan language which the Pongs spoke, *phra* means God as distinguished from ordinary gods. Since Vishnu was the Supreme God, the Pongs called Vishnu Phra Vishnu or simply *phra* The Shan word *phra* denoting an image of Vishnu came to the Manipuri language along with the image of Vishnu. But in the process, it became a two-syllable word *phura* according to the genius of the Manipuri language, in which most words have two or more syllables In contrast to Manipuri, in the Shan language all words have one syllable only So the slight change from *phra* to *phura* is natural In Manipuri *lat* (from Sanskrit *aradh*, to worship) means to worship So the Brahmins who worshipped daily the image of Vishnu from Pong came to be known as Phura-latpam from which word, the modern word Phurai-latpam is derived. But *phra* in the sense of God never became a Manipuri word

Inspite of the regular worship of Vishnu, Kyamba was not initiated to Vaishnavism by a preceptor

Building of a Vishnu temple

According to Shri W Yumjao Singh, a pioneer archeologist, Kyamba built a Vishnu temple of brick at Bishnupur, about 18

miles to the south-west of Imphal The temple deteriorated much upto the 1950's But it became a protected monument in the early 60's

It is certain that after getting the image of Vishnu from Pong, Kyamba kept it in a temple of brick The particular type of the brick temple in which the image of Vishnu *(phura)* was kept and worshipped came to be called *phura* Thus the word underwent a change in meaning through association —a change called semantic change in the jargon of linguists

A thorough study of the architecture of the Vishnu Temple is expected to throw a flood of light on the cultural contacts between Manipur and the rest of India It is not yet done

Another name of Kyamba

Kyamba is simply the reign-name the king assumed after the conquest of Kyang It is not his personal name Mutua Jhulon Singh in his *Vijay Panchalee* mentions the Sanskrit name of the king as Chintamani A genealogy of the kings of Manipur shows his Sanskrit name as Muktabali, meaning 'Offering of Pearls' Chintamani on the other hand. is a fabulous jewel fulfilling all wishes

A main watershed

The beginning of the worship of Vishnu in 1470 is one of the most important watersheds in the history of Manipur It marks the beginning of the waning of Shan influence The culture of Manipur is a piece in the mosaic of Indian culture. But from 1074 for almost 400 years there was the ascendency of Shan influence But now the process of restoring the balance began The process was slow in the first few years following 1470 but it soon gathered momentum. From the beginning of the worship of Vishnu, the decline of the influence of the Shans of Upper Burma was rapid It became even more rapid after the death of a king named Khagemba in 1652.

On the other hand, the beginning of the worship of Vishnu marked the resumption of the immigration of the Brahmins and other castes from the rest of North India. The turmoil which swept North India beginning from Sultan Mahmud's invasion in 1000 A.D. now abated. Muslim rule had become an accomplished fact in North India. Some of those Brahmins and members of other castes who felt that they should continue to live under Hindu rule, and had the necessary means and courage of travel, came to Manipur. This distant kingdom became their haven

From 1470, Manipur was on the way to become the easternmost citadel of Vaishnavism. A great Vaishnavite movement swept all over India in the 15th, 16th and the 17th centuries. This is the period when Ramananda, Vallabhacharya, Chaitanya and Shankardeva preached and Chandidas, Surdas and Mira sang. Manipur, as a part of India, was naturally swept by this movement, although somewhat belatedly.

The prime factor in all progress of Manipur from the beginning of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th century was Vashnavism Kyamba's worship of Vishnu paved the way for the rise of Vaishnavism. The beginning of Vishnu worship in 1470 should be seen in this light.

Death of Kyamba

After a successful reign of 40 years Kyamba died in 1508 at the age of 64 He was a valiant warrior and a good statesman. His conquest of the Kabaw Valley greatly enhanced he power, prestige and the economic status of Manipur.

CHAPTER—X

KOIREMBA TO MUNGYAMBA

Kyamba had two queens A queen gave birth to Koiremba and Nongthonba Another queen gave birth to Lam Kyamba. In the previous chapter we have seen that Nongthonba died one year after his victory over the invaders from the Gangetic valley. He was childless

KOIREMBA

Koiremba ascended the throne in 1508 at the age of 20 He had two victories in the hill areas-one at Kansoi and another at Khoibu in 1508 and 1511 respectively

His reign saw an unfortunate enmity between the king and the Prince of the Angoms who was his father-in-law. In the annual boat-race held in the Manipuri month of Hiyangei (roughly November), the Prince of the Angoms got a certain information about his daughter, the queen He did not like it The king withheld an important honour to which his father-in-law the Prince of the Angoms was entitled The unhappy state of affairs came to an end in 1511.

Koiremba died without issue in 1512 at the age of 24 after a reign of 4 years

LAM KYAMBA

Lam Kyamba succeeded his brother Koiremba in 1512. His short reign of 11 years is packed with important events. In 1514, a scribe named Kavi Chandra arrived from Tripura. In

1516, a Brahmin arrived from Assam. This is the first reference to Assam in the Royal Chronicle. The arrival of the Brahmin shows which way the wind was blowing. We will find the Manipuris shortly afterwards improving the route to Assam for better communication. In 1517, Bhageerath an ancestor of the Lairik-yengbams arrived in Manipur.

Lam Kyamba rebuilt the palace at Kangla. It was inaugurated in 1522.

Natural calamities

There was a famine in 1515. This is the first famine recorded in the Royal Chronicle. The cause is not given. But it might be the growth of population and failure of crops because of flood in autumn. If a flood occurs late in September or the beginning of October, replantation with rice seedlings does not yield any crop because of the diminished sunshine. In those days, import of rice from Assam or Bengal was out of question.

Smallpox epidemic

There was an epidemic of smallpox in 1520. This is also the first smallpox epidemic recorded in the Royal Chronicle. There might be smallpox epidemics previously also ; because smallpox is endemic in eastern India and south-east Asia. The recording of the flood and the epidemic shows that the interest of the chroniclers was no longer confined to purely political events only.

No coronation ceremony

Lam Kyamba reigned 11 years. He was a king ; but in the fairly long period of 11 years, his coronation ceremony was not held. He died in 1523 at the age of 38.

NONG-YIN PHABA

Lam Kyamba had two queens. One of them gave birth to Nong-yin Phaba and the other queen, to Kabomba,

Nong-yin Phaba ascended the throne in 1523 at the tender age of 10. The Royal Chronicle does not record who the regent was. The government was weak. One day the Prince of the Angoms came decorated with egret dyed with lac. The queen dowager, mother of Nong-yin Phaba, objected on the ground that the Angoms were not entitled to that honour. This cut the Prince of the Angoms to the quick. He killed both the dowager queen and the king in 1524.

What punishment followed the murder is not recorded. Angom Principality was at this time a thing of the distant past. The Prince was now a noble of the king. Was there an under current of palace intrigue ? It has not yet been delved into

Nong-yin Phaba reigned one year only and died without issue. He was killed before the coronation ceremony could be held. Nothing is recorded about him in *Ningthourol Lambuba* ; because he did not tour outside the capital.

KABOMBA

Kabomba succeeded his brother Nong-yin Phaba in 1524 at the still more tender age of 6. He reigned 18 years and died when he was only 24. But his reign saw a number of important events.

Early part of the reign

We have no precise idea of who the regent was ; but *Ningthourol Lambuba* says that when the court was held, the boy king sat on the throne on his mother's lap. This means that his mother, a dowager queen, sat on the throne for the purpose of holding the king on her lap. The dowager queen did not sit on the throne in her own right but for the purpose of placing the king on her lap. We infer from this that the government was carried on, in the name of the king, according to the collective wisdom of the court.

Assumption of the reign-name

When the king was adolescent, he invaded a Shan (Kabaw) town in the Kabaw Valley and subdued it. It is from this

incident that he assumed the reign-name Kabomba meaning 'Conqueror of Kabaw' i.e. conqueror of the land inhabited by the Kabaws. This was a little before the invasion of Manipur by the Tripuris.

Invasion by the Tripuris

In 1533, the people of Tripura invaded Manipur under the leadership of their chief Panchama. They advanced upto the Leimatag, the hill-stream flowing between Laimaton Range and Laimaton Phourungba. The Manipuri army intercepted the invaders there. The Manipuri king led his army in person according to the custom of the Ningthouja kings mentioned in a previous chapter.

The invaders were routed and two important persons were brought to the capital as prisoners. To commemorate this victory, a canal named Takhen Khong ('Tripura Canal') was dug in the capital. It served as a very useful boat way for a long time. Remnants of the canal can still be seen at Brahmapur in Imphal.

Tripura was known to the Manipuris as Takhen, a deviation from Sanskrit *dakshin* (south) ; because Tripura is to the south of Sylhet the point from which they went to Tripura.

Cattle epidemic

There was a cattle epidemic in 1534. This was followed by a still worse epidemic in 1535. A large number of oxen (bulls, bullocks calves, heifers and cows) died. The expression used in the Royal Chronicle is *shan* meaning oxen. But in the countryside, buffaloes are also sometimes, though incorrectly, called *shan*. The possibility of buffaloes also dying in large numbers cannot therefore be ruled out.

Road to Assam improved

The Manipuris were ever ready to improve the means of communication with the Surma valley and the Brahmaputra valley. In 1536, the road to Assam was improved. The

journey was difficult as it passed over hills and through dense forests. But the people of those days were also more hardy and the road served its purpose well. It was a means of contact with the Brahmaputra valley.

Friendly contact with Assam

In 1536, Kabomba sent a Manipuri girl to be a wife of Suhumung, the Ahom king of Assam. This entry in the Royal Chronicle is corroborated by an entry in *Ahom Buranji* kept independently in the Brahmaputra valley in the Ahom court[4]. It is written in the Ahom language in the Ahom script. The Ahom king already had three queens. They did not like the idea of a Manipuri girl coming as their co-wife. Disregarding their sentiment, the Ahom king received the girl.

The Ahom king sent return presents in 1536-37 to the Manipuri king. According to *Ahom Buranji*[5], he sent a few girls (to be wives of the Manipuri king) and some elephants. The arrival of an elephant from Assam in Manipur is recorded in the Royal Chronicle. What happened to the girls and the other elephants is not known. The Manipuris named the elephant from Assam Tekhao Ngamba—. 'Conqueror of Assam.'

Cultural contact

We saw above that a Brahmin arrived from Assam in 1516. The cultural contact might not be brisk at that time ; but it was there. But the improvement of the road to Assam in 1536 and the exchange of presents between the king of Assam and the king of Manipur in 1536-37 certainly facilitated cultural contact. We find the increased contact reflected in the use of *tekhao roo* (a kind of fish-trap of basket-work) introduced from Assam in 1536-37. Seeing the model, the Manipuris made the traps the same year (Shakabda 1458 corresponding to 1536-37). This kind of weir is still used ir Manipur in streams. Aniseed was introduced the same year.

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4 and 5. *Ahom Buranji* translated by Golap Chandra Barua pp. 77-78.

Upper Assam (upto about Kamrup) was known to the Manipuris as Tekhao. The capital of Assam was near modern Sibsagar on the bank of the Dikhau river. The Dikhau was known to the Manipuris as the Tikhao (*d* sound changing to *t* sound) which soon corrupted into the Tekhao. The river gave the name to the country in which it flowed. We will find in a subsequent chapter also the benefits of improving the road to Assam. Since a tamed elephant came to Manipur from Assam by this road, it was fairly wide and good.

Minor calamities

There were mild smallpox epidemics in 1531 and 1541 There was a great flood in 1538 but it subsided very quickly and no damage was done. The Royal Chronicle does not mention the month of the flood. But we infer that it was at or a little before the commencement of the monsoon when the level of Logtag was still low. The account also implies that the drainage system consisting of the rivers was good.

Rebellion by the Kabaws

The Kabaws rose in a rebellion in 1542. It was a minor rebellion and was put down easily. But this was the king's last achievement. He died the same year.

Unsolved problem

The Royal Chronicle says that the king conquered Kale in 1541. Where is Kale ? Does the chronicler mean Kalewa in Burma ?

TANGJAMBA

Kabomba was succeeded by his son Tangjamba in 1542. Tangjamba's reign of 3 years is singularly uneventful. This is all the more strange considering that he was 26 when he ascended the throne.

CHALAMBA

King Kyamba's younger brother Sanongba had three sons. Chalamba was one of them. He ascended the throne in 1545.

The Wangkheirakpams, a section of the Manipuris, are descendants of King Chalamba's brother Khongnamba. The Wangkheimayums, another section of the Manipuris, are descended from Chinga-yangba, another brother of King Chalamba.

Arrival of the Kshetrimayums

There is a section of the Manipuris called the Kshetrimayums. Manipuri Kshetri is a deviation from Sanskrit Kshatriya. We have been dealing with the arrival of Brahmins in this book in different reigns. Besides the Brahmins, some Kshatriyas came and settled in Manipur in historical times. The descendants of the Kshatriyas who arrived in this period are now called the Kshetrimayums.

Chalamba's reign is memorable for the beginning of the arrival of the ancestors of the Kshetrimayums. The arrival of Kshetrimayums is dealt with in a book called *Khetri Lon*. It is an Immigration Book, like *Bamon Khunthog* and *Lairik-yengbam Lon*. Like the Brahmins and the Lairik-yengbams, the descendants of the Kshatriyas gradually spoke Manipuri as their mothertongue and ultimately became Manipuris. In patriotism and service to Manipur they became as good as the original inhabitants. Like Brahmins, they have no *yek* among them.

Brahmin immigration

The ancestor of the Kanouji-mayum Manipuri Brahmins arrived in this reign. He came from Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh. Hence the Manipuri surname Kanouji-mayum. Their original surname in Uttar Pradesh and their family-god can be ascertained from *Bamon Khunthog*.

Invasion of Cachar ?

According to *Ningthourol Lambuba,* Chalamba invaded Cachar and conquered some villages. Cachar is referred to as Thongnang Mayang in the chronicle. It further says that fruit trees bearing sweet fruits and areca-palms abounded in the villages, which were in the borderland of Cachar. The chronicle says that Chalamba caught Rasagun the 'owner of many areca-palms'.

The incident is not recorded in the Royal Chronicle. But it is a fit subject for *Ningthourol Lambuba* to record. Was it merely an inroad ?

Sanskrit name of Chalamba

In a manuscript of the genealogy of the kings of Manipur, Chalamba's Sanskrit name is shown as Tamaripu (Enemy of Darkness ?)

Chalamba died in 1562 at the age of 48, after a reign of 17 years.

MUNG YAMBA

Chalamba's son Thangwai Ningthou Kiamba succeeded his father in 1562. He was 18. He assumed the reign-name Mung Yamba as we shall see under the next heading.

Assumption of the reign-name

The conquest of the Kabaw Valley in 1470 in the reign of Kyamba brought the domain of Manipur upto the River Ningthee called the Chindwin by the Burmese. The progress of Manipur was carried one step further in the reign of Thangwai Ningthou Kiamba. The Manipuris now crossed the Ningthee (Chindwin) and were on their way to get some territory and sphere of influence beyond the upper reaches of the river.

In 1563, he invaded the twin cities Mungkhong and Mungyang situated beyond the Ningthee and conquered both. The Manipuris caught 5 prominent people, including two chiefs, as prisoners and brought some muskets as war trophies.

On the conquest of Mungyang, the king assumed the reign-name Mung Yamba meaning the 'Conqueror of Mung-yang'

Importance

The battle of 1563 is the first recorded contact with the Burmese. Muskets are mentioned for the first time in the Royal Chronicle. It is a freak of History that the first meeting of the Manipuris and the Burmese should be in a battle. It is also strange that the relation between these two peoples remained almost always belligerent from 1563 to the Third Burmese War when Burma finally became a part of the British Empire

Other military successes.

In 1571, the king attacked Samjok called Thaungdoot by the British. After his success there, he quelled in the same year a trouble in the area inhabited by the Anals, a hill people. In 1580, he suppressed a similar trouble in the area of the Moyons, another hill-people. He successfully attacked the Kabaws again in 1585. He again attacked Samjok in 1592. This time, the principality was devastated.

Military training of the crown prince

In 1576, a son was born to Mung Yamba. He was named Ningthou Lanba, meaning the king skilled in warfare. Manipuri prince used to have their education in statecraft and warfare and the use of arms. Mung Yamba went a step further. To give practical training to lessons in warfare, he took the crown prince in one of the expeditions in 1594.

The training was not in vain. We shall find in the next chapter that when the crown prince became the king, he had to fight with the Chinese in the east and the Muslims in the west. Surely, the training he received from his father helped him.

Natural calamities and accidents

There was an earthquake in 1589 about January. This is the first recorded earthquake in the Royal Chronicle. But no damage is mentioned. Locusts destroyed rice crops in 1590.

Fire broke out in the palace in 1585 and 1591 and the king's own residence was on fire. This shows that the palaces of those days were of wood. The fire of 1585 was somewhat great. Starting from the palace, it spread to areas of the erstwhile Angom Principality. In 1565, a boat capsised in the River Imphal while returning from Sugnu and two ladies of the palace died. In 1579, Mung Yamba's queen while crossing a river fell from the bridge, sustained injuries and died.

Immigration of Brahmins

The ancestors of the Manipuri Brahmins having the surnames Labuktongbam and Gurumayum arrived in Mung-Yamba's reign. The ancestors of the Labuktongbams came from Shantipur (West Bengal). It appears that while in Bengal they were Bandopadhyays. They encamped in a rice-field on reaching Manipur. From this circumstance, their descendants now have the surname Labuktongbam meaning 'Settlers in the Rice-field.' The ancestors of the Gurumayums came from Krishnanagar (West Bengal). Their surname while in Bengal was Mishra.

Alleged Burmese suzerainty

Some scholars who write the history of Burma say that the Burmese king Bayi-nnaung had suzerainty over Manipur. Thus W.S. Desai says that by 1569, Bayi-nnaung subdued the Shan princes and the Rajah of Manipur[6]. According to him, they all accepted his suzerainty[7]. G.E. Harvey says that by 1559, Bayi-nnaung annexed the whole of Upper Burma, the Shan States, Manipur, Chiengmai and Viengchang[8]. In a map of Burma under the Toungoo dynasty[9], Harvey shows Manipur as a place under the suzerainty of Bayi-nnaung (1551-81). adding that after the death of Bayi-nnaung Burmese rule did not extend to Manipur.

6 and 7. *A Pageant History of Burma* p 68.
8. *Outline of Burmese History* p. 104. 9. *ibid* p. 98.

But Manipur was never under Burmese suzerainty except for very brief interludes between 1819 and 1825. The Royal Chronicle is thoroughly dependable for such matters. It records so many invasions from the west and the east including Burmese invasions in which the Manipuris were temporarily defeated. If Burmese suzerainty were a fact, there is no reason why the Royal Chronicle would not record it

A scrutiny of the Burmese history of this period also makes one doubt the claim Bayi-nnaung built a new city at Pegu and each of the twenty gates of the city was named after the vassal who built it Thus we find the Prome Gate, Chiengmai Gate, Toungoo Gate, etc. But Manipur had nothing to do with the building of the new city or any of its gates Bayi-nnaung built pagodas in Chiengmai and other conquered kingdoms and the Burmese used to point out the pagodas as proofs of their conquest. In Manipur, the Burmese could not even set foot, not to speak of building a pagoda.

The view that Bayi-nnaung annexed or got suzerainty over Manipur is not found in D G E Hall's *Burma*[10] or *A History of South-east Asia*[11]. Upto 1562, Bayi-nnaung sent campaigns against Manipur and the Shan States of Bhamo, Chiengmai and Tinzin and raids up the rivers Taping and the Shweli[12]. According to this authority, all his campaigns were not plain sailing[13] Ultimately, however most of the Shan states on the fringe of Burma were forced to accept Bayi-nnaung's suzerainty[14] Since Manipur is not a Shan state, the natural inference is that Manipur could not be forged to accept Bayi-nnaung's suzerainty In plain English, Bayi-nnaung's campaign against Manipur failed But this is what the Royal Chronicle records

From the names of the prisoners of war recorded in the Royal Chronicle, we infer that two of them were Shan Chiefs According to the chronicle, the Burmese and the Manipuris

10, 12, 13 and 14 *Burma* p 42. 11 *History of South-east Asia* pp. 212-213.

divided the territory among themselves. The domain of Manipur *ante bellum* was upto the River Ningthee (Chindwin) only. For the battle, the Manipuris crossed the river and invaded the trans-Ningthee cities. There is no question of Bayi-nnaung's forces reaching Manipur.

The difference of 1 year between the date mentioned by D.G.E. Hall (1562) and the date recorded in the Royal Chronicle (1563) is immaterial. According to the Royal Chronicle, the battle was in Shakabda 1485. In our view, the fight of the Manipuris with the Burmese recorded in the Royal Chronicle is indirectly corroborated by Burmese account kept independently in the Irrawaddy valley. The capture of some muskets from the Burmese again adds to the faithfulness of the account of the Royal Chronicle; for the Burmese of this time began to use firearms obtained from the Portuguese. Bayi-nnaung had a Portuguese friend named Diogo who provided some firearms to him.

Our reading of the history of Burma is that Bayi-nnaung failed in his fight with Manipur and after this failure, he diverted his attention to Ayuthia in 1563.

Society

The Manipuri society became richer by the addition of immigrants from the west The circumstances in which the Kshetrimayums and the Lairik-yengbams began their career in Manipur are interesting. *Khetri Lon* begins with the words *Shri Ramachandraya namah* (Obeisance to God Rama). Khetri Durga Singh (the name Durga means fort) married a Manipuri woman named Parvati. *Lairik-yengbam Lon* likewise begins with the words *Shri Ramachandraya namah*. A certain Muslim ruler wrote a letter to the Manipuri king Lam Kyamba. It was, we believe, in Persian in Persian script. The book says that no one at the court of Manipur could read it. The king therefore sent three persons to Tripura to fetch a scribe able to read it. It is in these circumstances that they brought Kavi Chandra in 1514. Brahmins came with their books, their cultural background and languages.

In the few welfare activities of the state at this time, there were some which directly benefitted people of the countryside, hills and suburbs. The improvement of the road to Phayeng in 1552, the digging of the Leishang Khong canal in 1555 (to commemorate a victory), the digging of Takhen Khong ('Tripura Canal') in 1534 and the improvement of the road to Assam in 1536 are instances in point The digging of Takhen Khong benefitted the people of the capital city as well. Some of the measures such as the road to Phayeng, Takhen Khong and Leishang Khong are conferring benefits on the people even now When water transport was replaced by road transport using motor vehicles, the people began to use canals as long, public ponds, making sometimes improvised partitions They also grow vegetables like *Ipomea aquatica* (Manipuri *kolami*) Even now those who live on the banks of the canals do not know what water famine is

Manipuri kings except one or two, were of active habits Whenever they could snatch time from military expeditions and other onerous duties, they toured the countryside and the hill areas to cultivate contact with the people Chalamba's tour of the countryside in 1548 and Mung Yamba's tour of hills inhabited by the Kabuis in 1577 are instances in point

Impact of world events

Christopher Columbus set sail in 1492 to discover India and discovered the Bahamas, Cuba and some other islands of the West Indies The brilliant discovery was followed by feverish efforts of European nations to find a sea route to India The famous Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 The Portuguese fleet was at Calicut in 1500 Not long after, the Portuguese reached Burma and sold firearms to the Burmese It was the ambition of Burmese kings to conquer Manipur, because the role Manipur played in the politics of Burma was out of all proportion to its very small—almost tiny—in size and population. Bayi-nnaung, king of Burma (1551-1581), used against

Manipur the firearms he acquired from the Portuguese. Thus began the impact of the rounding the Cape of Good Hope on the history of Manipur. Later, the French supplied firearms to the Burmese and the Burmese used these firearms against Manipur. Later on, Manipur got more than its share of the effect of the rivalry between the French and the English which went on all over the globe.

Manipur is far inland whether it is approached from Calcutta or Rangoon. Inspite of this, Manipur felt the impact of some major events in navigation such as the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope (1486), the discovery of America (1492) and the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope (1498) within 65 years of the arrival of the Portuguese fleet at Calicut.

How did the Manipuris react to the increasing flow of of European arms and ammunition into the hands of the Burmese who were bent upon conquering Manipur? We shall see in the following pages.

On the bright side of things, the Manipuris quickly got the benefit of introduction of pineapple, chillies and tobacco by the Portuguese in India. Later, they also got the benefit of the introduction of European vegetables by the English. Still later the English introduced *Bixa orellana* (Manipuri *ureirom*) into Manipur. The beautiful colour of its dye became a part of Manipuri culture

CHAPTER—XI

KHAGEMBA

Mung Yamba died in 1597 and his son Ningthou Lanba succeeded him in that year at the age of 24. The new king assumed the reign-name Khagemba or the 'Conqueror of the Chinese', With the accession of this king, we come across a great personality. He was one of the greatest kings of Manipur.

First contact with the Muslims

Khagemba's younger brother Sanongba, on account of a misunderstanding with his brother, decided to rise in rebellion against the king. He fled to Cachar and raised a big army including a large number of Muslims equipped with firearms.

In 1606, Sanongba came at the head of this army and encamped at Bishnupur, about 18 miles to the south-west of Imphal. The rebellion or rather invasion being on a large scale, the king went in person with a sufficiently strong force to repel the invaders. The king encamped at Toubul and utilised nearby Khoijuman also as his base.

After some fighting, the king won a decisive battle. According to the Royal Chronicle the king's army captured 30 elephants, 1000 muskets, 1000 warriors and a large number of their helpers including blacksmiths, utensil makers, washermen, grooms and elephant tenders. Among the prisoners of war there were many Muslims. The king himself captured 6 prominent persons including one Tekka Raj (Deka Raja ?). The pretender Sanongba himself was captured but was pardoned.

All the captured persons including the Muslims were re-habilitated in Manipur. A new office was established for looking after the Muslims. This invasion was a major threat to the independence of Manipur. By defeating the invaders, the invasion was turned to Manipur's advantage. Its war-capability was boosted. To posess 1000 muskets was not a small matter in those days. By re-habilitation, the erst-while enemies were turned into useful, patriotic subjects of Manipur.

The Royal Chronicle is silent on the cause of this major invasion. So is *Ningthourol Lambuba*. Because the cause was well-known to everybody. It started from a private grudge of Sanongba against one of his brothers and it was fanned by his overweening ambition to seize the throne. Sanongba set the bad example of using Cachar for rising against the government of Manipur. Later, his example was followed and Cachar became the spring-board of Manipuri pretenders. But the result of the invasion was good. It further accelerated the contact of Manipur with the rest of India.

No Chinese invasion

Sir James Johnstone in his *My Experiences In Manipur And Naga Hills* speaks of a big Chinese invasion of Manipur about the year 1230. T.C. Hodson agrees with the invasion but places it in 1630.

No chronicle of Manipur speaks of a Chinese invasion of Manipur. With respect to Sir James Johnstone, we should like to point out that his date is too early. By 1250, Manipur was still very weak. Moirang Principality was still independent. Khuman Principality had accepted the suzerainty of the Ningthoujas but it was not yet integrated. Had the Chinese invaded Manipur at that time, Manipur would not have the resources to repel them. Hodson nearly hits the mark, regarding the date. But he too speaks of a Chinese invasion. The fact is that the Chinese never invaded Manipur.

China was a distant country. Shan kingdoms existed between Manipur and China as buffer states. What happened is that Manipur invaded a Chinese town and conquere dit.

Conquest of a Chinese town

We have been following the decline of the Shan power from 1470. From the time of Mung Yamba, the once powerful Shans were attacked by the Burmese from the south ; by the Manipuris from the west ; and by the Chinese from the north. In this state of affairs, there were sometimes fights between the Manipuris and the Burmese, and on one occasion in 1631, there was a fight between the Chinese and the Manipuris.

The Manipuri king invaded a Chinese town. The name of the town is not mentioned in *Ningthourol Lambuba*. It is simply referred to as *Khagee khulellei* (the Chinese town or the big Chinese village). The Manipuri king attacked it in 1631 and conquered it taking its chief prisoner. After this incident the Manipuri king assumed the reign-name Khagemba (the Conqueror of the Chinese). In the entry of the year 1631 the Royal Chronicle refers to the king, for the first time, as the 'king who defeated the Chinese'. *Ningthourol Lambuba* clearly says that the king changed his name to Khagemba.

We believe that this did not result in permanent conquest of the Chinese town (or big village). In the updated *Loiyamba Shil-yen* we find the different kinds of tribute paid by the dependencies of Manipur. The Shan principalities, for example, paid silk as tribute and those beyond the western hills paid conchs and areca-nuts as tribute. What tribute the Chinese town gave is not mentioned. We infer from this that the victory over the Chinese town did not lead to permanent conquest.

Fight with the Tripuris

Khagemba had wars with the Tripuris in 1603 and 1634. In the war of 1634. his army captured 200 people of Tripura.

Conflict with Burma

There was an armed conflict with Burma in 1648. Khagemba sent promptly Prince Mung Yamba (not to be confused with king Mung Yamba, father of Khagemba) at the head of an army. The Burmese were defeated without much difficulty. The importance of this fight is that the Manipuris had now come into regular contact with the Burmese, the predominant people of Burma.

From 1648 onwards, the Royal Chronicle refers to Burma as Awa. The word comes from Ava, which was the capital of Buıma for a long time. The English also used to refer to Burma at one time as Ava. Harvey says that the Chinese too referred to Burma as Ava. The capital of Burma was shifted to Ava in the reign of Thanlun (1629 48). Before 1648, the Royal Chronicle refers to Burma as Khamran, a name of uncertain derivation at present.

Natural calamities

There was a flood in 1611. It destroyed standing rice crops when they were ripening. But there was no famine as the crop was normal the next year. In 1633, there was a greater flood destroying ripening rice crops as in 1611 but on a wider scale. In 1634 there was drought, a rather rare phenomenon in those days of abundant forest. The combined effect of the great flood of 1633 and the drought of 1634 was a famine in the Valley in 1634.

The king's government had in those days comfortable buffer stocks of paddy in granaries in different parts of the kingdom. They were called Royal Granaries. The king and the queen visited the different Royal Granaries and distributed paddy to the people free of cost. No death due to famine is recorded.

It would be interesting to know whether the drought of 1634 was an isolated phenomenon or an all-India phenomenon, or at least a phenomenon of eastern India. Some

of the droughts in Manipur during British Paramouncy were all-India phenomena

Accidents

In 1601 while inspecting the building of a Royal Granary near Lamphel, the king was injuried when it suddenly collapsed Fortunately the injuries were minor In 1634, the king's elephant Mukta went mad and killed his tender

Woods

Inspite of the increase of population and reclamation of more and more lands, woods thickets, bamboo groves and jungles of reeds were still numerous in the 17th century There is a small hill called Chinga in Imphal (a little less than 2 miles to the south from the zero milestone) It is now a busy place with a traffic din from early morning till night But 3 tigers were caught there in 1644. This is a measure of change during the last 350 years or so.

Use of firearms

In the reign of Khagemba, the Manipuris used some firearms seized from their enemies in successful battles Some Shans (Kabaws) and Burmese were employed as musketeers In 1640, there was an expedition to Nungtek, a hill village A Burmese musketeer was killed in action The Manipuris also made some experiments in 1628 in making muskets. Unlike the Burmese, the Manipuris did not get fresh supplies of arms and ammunition from European nations. In subsequent reigns also we get occasional reference to the use of firearms by the Manipuris. But they were used sparingly

Hill tours

Like his predecessors, the king toured hill areas to get first-hand information and for cultivating contact with the people. In 1642, Khagemba toured the areas inhabited by the Kabuis. In 1645, he toured the areas inhabited by the Chothes.

Arrival of Khetrimayums

Khetri Lon records that in the reign of Khagemba, Govinda Giri, an ancestor of the Khetrimayums arrived. Unlike *Bamon Khunthog*, *Khetri Lon* does not record the place of origin of the immigrants. But a more patient research might yield information History has so far withheld from us.

Brahmin immigrants

The ancestors of the Manipuri Brahmins having the surnames (1) Aribam (2) Shamurai-latpam (3) Sanglakpam (4) Hidangmayum (5) Kongbrai-latpam and (6) Thonga-tabam arrived and settled in Manipur in Khagemba's reign. The ancestors of the Aribam families who arrived in this reign are from Baraha Nagar (West Bengal). The ancestors of the Shamurai-latpam Brahmins are also from West Bengal, while those of Sanglakpam Brahmins are from East Bengal. The ancestors of Hidang-mayum Brahmins are from Kharadaha (West Bengal) and those of Kongbrai-latpam Brahmins are from Nabadwip (West Bengal). The ancestor of Thongatabam Brahmins is also from Kharadaha (West Bengal). He settled in Manipur on the bank of a river to the south of a bridge. Hence the surname Thonga-tabam (*thongkha/thonga* to the south of the bridge ; *tabam* the family of the settler/settlers). The other Brahmin families got their new surnames from the deiteis they worshipped or the offices they held.

The Royal Chronicle improved

We have seen Kyamba's reform of the Royal Chronicle. Khagemba further improved it with effect from Poinu (about December), 1649. Before this date, the months in which the recorded events took place are not mentioned. This is a drawback. We do not know in what part of the year the events took place. From December, 1649 we know the months of the events also.

Introduction of tobacco

Tobacco smoking was introduced into Manipur in 1610. Smoking at this stage was with the pipe. Very soon, the

Manipuris discarded the pipe and used the hookah to minimise the ill effects of tobacco smoking. The first hookahs were imported from the Mughal Empire. They were therefore called *mangal phoo* or 'Mughal pot'. Soon hookahs were made in Manipur. The first hookahs made here came into use in 1615.

The tobacco plant is native to Central America and tropical America. Jean Nicot (1530-1600), the French Consul at Lisbon introduced it into Portugal from America in 1558. He introduced it into France also. Nicotiana, the tobacco genus, and nicotine, the poisonous alkaloid from tobacco leaves, are named after him. The Portuguese introduced the tobacco plant into South India in the later part of the reign of Akbar (1556-1605). From South India, the tobacco plant and tobacco smoking were introduced into North India by the end of 1604 or the beginning of 1605. Within 5 years of the introduction of the tobacco plant and tobacco smoking to the court of Akbar, they were introduced into Manipur. In Manipur, the ill effects of tobacco smoking were not felt much on account of the widespread use of the hookah with a long neck and some water inside the pot. The tobacco plant spread with the growing popularity of smoking.

Introduction of chillies

Leithag Leikharon, a book written in the time of Khagemba, mentions chillies making it certain that the people of his time used it. The Royal Chronicle is silent on its introduction. It shows that it was not introduced in so spectacular a way as the tobacco.

Chillies originated in the West Indies. The Portuguese introduced it into India. It spread to East Bengal from where they reached the Manipur Valley in the reign of Khagemba.

Introduction of guava

The guava tree is a native of Central America. The Portuguese introduced it into the Irrawaddy valley. From there

it spread to the Shan kingdom of Pong. According to tradition, the king of Pong presented a sapling of guava to Khagemba to help cure dysentry among the Manipuris. The tender buds were eaten as a medicine at the first symptoms of dysentry.

The introduction of tobacco. chillies, guava, pineapple, *Bixa orellana* and many other plants into Europe from America was the result of Columbus's two voyages of discovery and the subsequent voyages of the enterprising European nations. Their introduction into India was possible because of the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope in 1486, the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 and the subsequent voyages of the enterprising Portuguese and the English.

Manipur in the reign of Khagemba

The long reign of Khagemba lasting 55 years was peaceful and prosperous. There were invasions from other parts of eastern India and wars with the Burmese. But the king was strong enough to repel the invasions and defeat the Burmese without much difficulty. Apart from these brief interludes, there was peace and tranquility in the realm.

The king established 10 new bazars in 1614 in different parts of the kingdom One bazar each was allotted to the headquarters of Moirang, Khuman, Sekta and centres of cultural groups like Phayeng and Andro. In 1605, he introduced a practice of awarding gold and silver decorations for distinguished service. In the same year he introduced the palanquin (Manipuri *dolai* ; Pali *dola*) for the use of nobles and members of the royal family. In 1623, gold-washing was introduced.

A new style of putting on the turban was introduced in 1606. People put on silver caps also. Men were fond of manly games. Regular playing of polo under newly framed rules of the game commenced in 1606. The annual boat-races were as popular as ever ; but a new feature was introduced

in 1635. Thenceforth, a boat was kept apart for the image of Vishnu--the image of Vishnu presented by the king of Pong to Kyamba. The boat of Vishnu did not join the contest. In the imagination of the people, Vishnu witnessed the boat-race.

The age-long friendship with Pong continued. Assam too remained friendly as before. The Burmese created trouble occasionally ; but they were not strong at this time and were kept at bay. Manipur and Cachar (an independent kingdom at that time) reached an agreement in 1604 not to invade one another. Tripura created minor trouble on two occasions ; but it was weaker than Cachar and much weaker than Burma. The king's brother visited China in 1631.

Manipur was a rice bowl. People had enough cheap, wholesome food to eat. After the great flood of 1633 and the drought of 1634, the government took up the cultivation of *taothrabi*, (a kind of rice which can withstand flood admirably) as abundant caution. This measure utilised low lying and swampy lands for food production. Firewood was abundant. Manipur is blessed with a large number of salt-springs, The king inspected salt-wells in 1617. The people got all their requirements of salt from the salt-springs. Fruits and flowers abounded. In these affluent circumstances, literature blossomed in the reign of Khagemba.

The one sorry feature of his reign was the presence of animal sacrifice. In no other reign earlier or subsequent, was there loss of so much innocent animal life. It must however be said to the credit of the people of Manipur that the practice stopped after the reign of Khagemba.

The state of health was good. There was no epidemic of smallpox in his long reign of 55 years. There were of course some cases of the disease. In 1651 a princess died of it. Eradication was out of question at this time. The sapling of guava presented by the king of Pong acclimatized well in Manipur and propagated itself rapidly by seeds. Besides helping control of bacillary dysentry, a wholesome tasty fruit was

now cheaply available in Manipur. Today, there is no kingdom of Pong. Medicines much better than the buds of the guava tree are also known to pharmacology for curing dysentry. But the act of the unknown king of Pong still smells sweet.

The Manipuris of the time of Khagemba were a vivacious people, well-fed and confident. They were marching happily towards a still better age—the age of Gopal Singh Gareeb Niwaz, whom we will meet later on.

But it must also be said that Manipur, like the rest of India, neglected at this time physical and life sciences. Galileo (1564-1642), the Italian scientist, made the first telescope, invented the thermometer and discovered the law of the oscillation of the pendulum. His pupil Evangelista Torricelli (1608-1647), the Italian mathematician invented the barometer in 1644, improved the telescope and the microscope. The latter was invented by Jansen in 1590. The contribution of these instruments to the progress of science cannot be exaggerated. Western Europe was stealing a march on India. We will see its effect when we meet the French and the East India Company.

The end of Khagemba's reign

Khagemba's Sanskrit name was Khagendra (King of Birds). He died in 1652 at the age of 76 after a reign of 55 years It was on a Sunday in Ingen (roughly July).

CHAPTER—XII

KHUNJAOBA AND PAIKHOMBA

Khunjaoba, the second son of Khagemba, ascended the throne in 1652 at the age of 30 It was on a Saturday in the month of Thawan (roughly August). In a manuscript of the genealogy of the kings, his Sanskrit name is Shwetambuja (White Lotus).

Development activities

Khunjaoba devoted much of his time to development activities and made the capital city a better place to live in. In 1660, he dug a moat round the compound of the palace to make it impregnable. The next year, he built a bund along the course of the Naga stream as a measure of flood control. In 1665, he dredged the Nambul river from Chinga hill to Khwairamban Bazar and the Naga stream from Khwairamban to Thangmeiband. The Royal Chronicle says that the dredging was in Langban (roughly September). It was before the normal time for withdrawal of the monsoon. We infer that the rainfall was not heavy that year. In February and March 1666, he improved the site of Khwairamban Bazar by improving the drainage and raising bunds to protect it from inundation.

Epidemic among horses

In Kalen (about May) 1653, there was an epidemic affecting horses. In the following month nobles were fined.

What is the import of this cryptic account ? Did the king hold the nobles responsible ? If so, why ? The forte of the Manipuri army was the cavalry. It was mainly by means of the light horse that the freedom of the fatherland was maintained. It was mainly by means of the horse that the Manipuris took the offensive, when necessary. The import of the epidemic among horses is difficult to grasp in these days when we think of bombers, fighters, transport planes, tanks and guided missiles. The anxiety of the Manipuri people when their horses died in the epidemic may be better imagined.

Calamities

In February 1661, there was an epidemic affecting oxen and a large number of them died. It affected agricultural operations like tilling, harrowing and weeding. To make matters worse, there was an untimely great flood in late October affecting the rice harvest already affected by the cattle epidemic. As a cumulative result, there was a mild famine in 1662.

Military expeditions

There were only three military expeditions in his reign. He attacked Samjok twice—once in1653 and the second time in 1659. In the first expedition, the Manipuri army got many cows and buffaloes as spoils. In the second expedition, it got elephants. He sent an expedition to Mangsha, a small principality in the Kabaw Valley, in 1657. It is recorded that the small principality was devastated.

Contact with the Mughal Empire

In 1661 in the Manipuri month of Poinu (December, roughly), some Mughals—known to the Manipuris as the Mangals—visited Manipur. When they left is not recorded. The purpose of their visit is also not recorded. In the same month, three men were sent to visit the Mughal Empire. They returned to Manipur after about 1 year and 2 months.

What could this mean ? It was during Aurangzeb's reign. Did the Manipuris go to his court or to Bengal which was a part of the Mughal Empire ?

Contact with Assam and Tripura

In Lamda (about March) 1662 two men were sent to Assam. The envoys returned after 3 months. In 1663, about February an envoy from Tripura arrived with a woman and an elephant. After about one month, the envoy went back with the woman and the elephant.

Improvement of the Royal Chronicle

Khunjaoba's reign is memorable for further improvement of the Royal Chronicle. We have seen that Khagemba improved it with effect from Poinu (roughly December) 1649 by mentioning the month of the recorded event. Khunjaoba further improved it with effect from Thursday, the third day of Inga (roughly June), 1666. Henceforth, we know on what day of the month (what is called *tithi* in Sanskrit) and on what day of the week any recorded event took place. An example will make the point clear. There was a lunar eclipse in Poinu (roughly December) in 1588 Shakabda. While recording this event, the Royal Chronicle groups it under the events of Shakabda 1588 and says "On Saturday the fullmoon of Poinu there was a lunar eclipse".

Appearance of a comet

According to the Royal Chronicle, a comet appeared in 1664 in the months of Langban and Mera (September and October, roughly). Henceforth all lunar and solar eclipses visible in Manipur and appearances of comets visible in Manipur are recorded.

Law and order

In Khunjaoba's reign of 15 years, there were 16 executions, 2 cases of mutilation of the tip of the nose, 4 cases of transportation and 10 cases of fine. In this reign there

were 2 murders. The draconian law of the realm was largely responsible for the disconcertingly large number of executions.

Death of Khunjaoba

The king did not survive long his improvement of the Royal Chronicle. He died without issue on Tuesday the 27th day of Hiyangei (about November) 1666 at the age of 45.

PAIKHOMBA

Since Khunjaoba died childless, his nephew Paikhomba ascended the throne. It was on Friday the 5th day of Wakching (roughly January) in 1588 Shakabda. This will be by the end of December 1666 or the beginning of January 1667. He was about 21.

The circumstances in which he became the king are not yet fully understood. Between the death of Khunjaoba and Paikhomba's accession there is an interregnum of about one month and 7 days. What happened during this period ? Khunjaoba was childless, it is true ; but his brother Tonaba, father of Paikhomba, was still living. Why was he excluded from succession ?

Reclamation of jungle

The population was increasing. This necessitated fresh reclamation of jungle, With the reclamation of the jungle, the tigers which had been there created trouble. So tigers were caught and killed by organised effort. Thus in Paikhomba's reign of 36 years, 39 tigers were caught and killed. But, for every tiger caught, killed and recorded there must have been many which did not get the privilege of getting their obituary recorded in the Royal Chronicle.

To a reader by the end of the 20th century, this account may seem queer. But to the 17th century Manipuri, this fight was a matter of life-and-death. Jungles infested with wild animals were a great obstacle to the expansion of population and communication between different parts of the kingdom. If the

existence and culture of the Manipuris were to continue, jungles had to be cleared and dangerous wild animals killed.

Gladiatorial combat

In December 1687, the king, the queen, the nobles and the commoners of the capital witnessed a fight between men and tigers at the market-place. Out of 8 tigers caught that year, from Langon (a hill near Imphal), 3 were selected. The men were armed with spears. The tigers were speared to death in the arena.

This is a very mild dose of gladiatorial combat compared with those of Rome. This is also the only fight for amusement between men and animals we have on record.

Unusual fun

In 1674, the inhabitants of the capital were provided with an unusual fun. A tiger caught that year was disabled by breaking the fore legs. It was made to fight with an elephant at the marketplace. The result is not recorded,

Development works

Some development works were taken up during Paikhomba's reign. The road from Chinga to Mongsangei was improved in 1675. The Nambul river was dredged from Chinga downwards. It may be remembered that the river from Chinga upwards upto Khwairamban was dredged in the previous reign. The river bund of the right bank of the River Imphal from Singjamei to Kiamgei was built.

There was a drought in Kalen (roughly May) 1682. But rice-fields were irrigated with water from the rivers.

He improved salt-wells in 1694. Brick-making as an industry was introduced in this reign. In 1687, there was continuous brick-making by 4 *Panas* for 3 months.

Trade and commerce

There was trade with Burma, Cachar and Tripura. Manipur used to buy elephants from these kingdoms. Some of the

imported elephants were given Sanskrit names like Paban Singh and Pratika.

Astronomical phenomena

In 1688, on Saturday the 15th day of Sajibu (about April), there was a lunar eclipse. In the same month, on Sunday the new moon, there was a total solar eclipse. In 1692, in Phairen (about February)' on Sunday the 15th day of the month, there was a lunar eclipse. On Monday, the following newmoon, there was a solar eclipse. Besides these, two other solar eclipses and one other lunar eclipse are recorded.

In 1695, in Hiyangei (about November), a comet appeared.

Epidemics

In this reign, there were 2 smallpox epidemics—one in February 1673 and the other in January 1686.

There was a cattle epidemic in Kalen (about May) 1670. In Langban (about September) 1688 there was an epidemic affecting horses.

In 1680 in Phairen (about February) rabies raged among dogs, and many of them died.

Mauling by tigers

In this reign, a total of 8 men were mauled by tigers. All of them died. This was an unwelcome effect of clearing the jungle. When jungles were cleared, wild animals vanished. When wild animals which were the food of the tiger vanished, some tigers prowled in human habitations although most of them retired to fastnesses in the hills. When tigers prowl, mauling of men by them is a natural consequence. The mauling by tigers was a temporary phenomenon. It disappeared when the Valley was cleared of jungles.

Law and order

In this reign there were 4 cases of murder, 1 case of arson 6 cases of theft, and 1 case of rioting. Out of the 6 cases of theft, one was a case of stealing guns from a public office, one was a

case of stealing a silk dhoti which only the king, the nobility and other privileged persons could use and one was a case of stealing rice from a Royal Granary.

Arson was punishable with death. So was stealing of muskets. Theft of rice from a private house was not punishable with death. But if the theft was from a Royal Granary, it was an aggravated form punishable with death. The rice kept in the Royal Granaries was buffer stock to meet scarcity conditions created by untimely floods, drought and pests.

Private vengeance even in serious crimes was no longer allowed. In this reign a certain man committed an offence against a woman. Her husband killed the offender. Some centuries earlier, the husband would be allowed to escape scot-free. But now, he was tried and punished with a fine equivalent to the price of 10 slaves.

In the case of rioting, the parties involved were inhabitants of Yaiskul and a *leikai* (part of a town) called Tollong. One person died in the rioting. The parties were fined.

We find also in this reign the first mention of the prison. Prisons might have existed before this reign also. But it is only from Paikhomba's reign that we find it mentioned in the Royal Chronicle. We find some men, for the first time, sentenced to imprisonment.

A mild famine

In 1687, pests destroyed rice plants throughout 2 months—Inga and Ingen (roughly June and July). Rice was dear in that year. However, the king distributed rice free of cost to the weak and the disabled.

Military successes

Paikhomba had many military successes as well. The Kabaw Valley did not give him trouble. Instead it gave him silver, armour, caps and canopies as tribute.

There was a fight between the Tripuris and the Manipuris in 1696. The Manipuris won and caught 16 Tripuris as prisoners of war.

Information reached the capital in Phairen (about February) 1693 that the Burmese were about to invade Manipur. To forestall the invasion, the Manipuris invaded Burma in advance. Two Manipuri officers died on the bank of the River Ningthee ; but the purpose was served. There was no invasion by the Burmese.

Immigration of Brahmins

Some Brahmins from (1) Gujarat (2) Baranasi (3) Vrindaban and (4) Prayag arrived and settled in Manipur in Paikhomba's reign. They were the forefathers of the Manipuri Brahmin families (1) Shri-mayum (2) Bachaspati-mayum (3) Guru-mayum Angom lailatpam and (4) Brahmachari-mayum respectively. It appears that all of them came via Bengal. It further appears that the ancestors of the Shri–mayums stayed in Barishal district of Bengal for some time after migrating from Gujarat.

Victory over a Chinese town

According to *Ningthourol Lambuba*, Paikhomba invaded a Chinese town. The town manufactured glassware, silk cloths of nice designs and a kind of thick wollen cloth called *pharangji* used by the Manipuris as a seat for royalty and the most distinguished Brahmins. The name of the chief is recorded as Choupha Shumlong,—*choupha* meaning chief or prince. According to the chronicle, Paikhomba defeated the chief.

What was the nature of this fight ? A further examination of the account is called for.

Conquest of a town in Cachar

According to *Ningthourol Lambuba*, Paikhomba also invaded and conquered a town in Cachar. According to the chronicle, the town was near a river flowing with reddish water. The town was in 'the plain contiguous to the plain inhabited by the Bengalis of East Bengal.' We interpret the account to mean a town in Cachar.

According to the chronicle, Paikhomba defeated and caught its chief Supet Naran (Subhadra Narayan ?). This account like the previous account relating to the conquest of the Chinese town may be further examined.

Explanation of the reign-name

Paikhomba is a reign-name of the king and not his personal name. The king assumed it after he defeated the chief of the Paikhus—a people of modern Upper Burma—who ruled the principality Paikon. Since he conquered Paikon, he was called Paikhomba, the Conqueror of Paikon.

In a genealogy of the kings of Manipur, his name is Paikindra. It is Prakrit formation and not Sanskrit. In Prakrit, the rules of *sandhi* are simpler. Paika and Indra give Paikindra ; *gova* (cowherd ; Sanskrit *gopa*) and India (Sanskrit Indra) give *govinda*.

Wandering pilgrims

Link with the rest of India was maintained *inter alia* by the visit and departure of wandering pilgrims. Such a wandering pilgrim is referred to as *yogi* in the Royal Chronicle. A batch of 3 pilgrims who had been in Manipur for some time went back in 1676.

Introduction of maize

The first mention of maize in the Royal Chronicle is in Langban (about September) 1683. It was a novelty then. The king went to Mongsangei (a suburb) and ate maize in a social gathering in what may be called a 'maize party'.

Maize is a native of South America. The word *maize* is from Spanish. The Spaniards introduced maize into Europe from where it came to India. It was introduced into Manipur from the Mughal Empire. It is called in Manipuri *chugajag* or 'the rice of the *yogis*' (*chugee/jugee* ascetic ; *jag* cooked rice).

Events in hill areas

Whenever the kings of Manipur found time, they visited hill areas to know their condition at first-hand. Paikhomba

visited Luwangching in 1668, Chothe hills in 1670 and Namching in 1679. A disconcerting event took place in some hill areas to the south of the capital. Big, fat rats did great damage to rice plants in Langban (roughly September) 1672. Whether it was followed by a famine or not is not recorded. Probably it was not.

Contact with the Mughal Empire

In Sajibu (about April) 1671, two Mughal brick-makers arrived. They were brothers. A Brahmin of the astrologer class (called **Konok in Manipuri from Sanskrit** *ganaka* astronomer/astrologer) who was an expert in time keeping arrived in the same month. A horse too arrived from the Mughal Empire in the same month. The horse was afterwards known as the Mughal horse.

Death of Paikhomba

Paikhomba was childless. He died in January 1698 at the age of 53 after an eventful reign of 32 years. His end is recorded in the Royal Chronicle in these words : On Thursday, the 28th day of Wakching 1619 Shakabda, Paikhomba, the king of the Miteis, climbed the gold ladder at the age of 53. He was on the throne for 32 years.

'To climb the golden ladder' was a Manipuri expression meaning to die. It was believed that on the death of virtuous people and heroes, the gods lowered a ladder of gold spanning the gap between the earth and heaven. The souls of the virtuous and the brave were believed to climb the ladder and reach heaven. After this was done, the gods pulled up the ladder again.

CHAPTER—XIII

PITAMBAR CHARAI RONGBA

Paikhomba's younger brother, who held the office of Khwairakpa, predeceased his brother. Paikhomba died without issue. Therefore he was succeeded by his brother's son Pitambar Charai Rongba.

Pitambar Charai Rongba was crowned on Friday the 10th of Lamda (about March), 1698 He was about 25 at that time.

Arrival of Brahmins

In the reign of Pitambar Charai Rongba, the ancestors of the following Manipuri Brahmins came and settled in Manipur ; (1) Guru Aribam (2) Lai-mayum (3) Laipubam (4) Hangoibam (5) Hazari-mayum (6) Manohar-mayum (7) Mathurabasi-mayum (8) Lai-mayum-Anoubam and (9) Choudhuri mayum. The ancestors of the above Brahmin families came respectively from (1) Shweta Ganga, Puri (Orissa), (2) Tripura (3) Kanchan Nagar (Orissa ?), (4) Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), (5) Krishna Nagar (West Bengal), (6) Gambhila Nagar (West Bengal), (7) Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), (8) Tripura and (9) Utkal (Orissa),

The original surnames of the Brahmin immigrants and the reasons for assigning the new Manipuri surnames can be ascertained from *Bamon Khunthog*. The Laimayums, for example, were originally Chattopadhyays. Regarding the reason

for assigning the surname Hazarimayum to a section of Manipuri Brahmins, e.g., is that their ancestor came to Manipur at the head of one *hazar* (one thousand) persons. We have not attempted in this book to give the original surnames and the reasons for assigning the new surnames of all Brahmins for reasons of economy of space.

Formal initiation to Vaishnavism

Pitambar Charai Rongba was the first Manipuri king to be formally initiated to Vaishnavism. In Mera (about October) 1703, a Brahmin named Krishnacharya alias Rai Vanamali arrived in Manipur from Shweta Ganga (near Puri in Orissa)[1]. He was accompanied by his wife Krishnamayi, two Shudras and a Brahmin named Balabhadra Brahmachari[2]. On Wednesday the 5th of Sajibu (April, roughly) 1704, Rai Vanamali formally initiated the king to Vaishnavism. Since Rai Vanamali was the *guru* (preceptor) of the king, his descendants came to be known as the Guru Aribams or the family of the old *guru*. The epithet Aribam or old is there to distinguish them from the descendants of the *guru* of King Bhagya Chandra (see *post*) who are simply called the Guru-mayums.

The school of Vaishnavism to which Charai Rongba was initiated worshipped Shri Krishna as the Supreme Deity. This school of Vaishnavism worships Krishna with Radha. It may be remarked that the form of Vaisnavism preached by Shankardev in the Brahmaputra valley does not recognise Radha.

Pitambar Charai Rongba built a brick temple to Shri Krishna at Brahmapur Guru Aribam Leikai. According to the Royal Chronicle, the construction of the temple began on Friday the 19th day of Kalen (about May) 1707. It is still in a very good condition. It is a protected monument now. The king gave to his *guru* a village, a hill and 100 acres of rice-field as *guru dakshina*[3]. He also built a nine-roomed brick house for his guru.[4]

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1 to 4. From the family history of the Guru Aribams.

Edicts

He published his edicts regarding his government and the administration of justice by inscribing them on stones and erecting them at a prominent place in the capital. This was in December 1698, the year of his accession.

Contact with Burma

There was trade with Burma. The import of elephants from Burma continued as before. A Burmese architect arrived in 1706 and returned to his country after staying in the capital for about two and a half years. Some temples were built during this time ; but it appears that the workmanship was not good. In 1708 in Ingen (about July), a brick temple of goddess Kali collapsed killing one person and injuring two others. Two days after the mishap, the Burmese architect left for his country. We do not however have direct evidence that he built the Kali temple.

A Burmese woman rope-dancer arrived with her troupe in 1706 in Wakching (about January). She danced in public on the rope. A male dancer also danced on the rope. The Burmese woman returned to her country after staying in Manipur for about 28 days.

Natural calamities

Pitambar Charai Rongba's reign was by and large free from natural calamities. There were only four minor exceptions. In 1699, the Chakpi, a tributary of the River Imphal, was dangerously in spate and caused a flood at the southern extremity of the Valley. One man died in the flood. In July 1700, there was a minor drought.

In 1701, on Monday the first day of Hiyangei (by the end of October or just the beginning of November) there was a severe hailstorm. It was the time of harvesting rice. It was feared that the hailstones would do damage to the standing, ripe crop and sheaves in the field. The king visited some of the Royal Granaries on horseback and expressed sympathy to the farmers.

It is said that on the Continent, there are devices, such as keeping up artillery discharges at threatening periods, to ward off the hail. But such a device was out of question in 1701. What the king did was the only thing that could be done then.

In 1702 in Phairen (about February), there was an earthquake. Houses of those days were of wood and almost all of them were one-storied. There was no casualty.

Smallpox epidemic

In 1699 in Inga (about June), there was a minor smallpox epidemic. No death is recorded. If important personages died in an epidemic, their names are invariably recorded in the Royal Chronicle. Here no name is recorded. For these reasons we infer that it was a mild epidemic.

Friendship with hill chiefs

The king took care to foster friendship between hillchiefs and nobles of his court. In 1700, the chiefs of the eastern hills (i.e. the hills to the east of the capital) came down to the capital. The king asked his nobles to make friends with them. He was successful. The nobles made lasting personal friendship with the hill chiefs.

Development works

Pitambar Charai Rongba continued his uncle Paikhomba's work of clearing the Manipur Valley of jungles and tigers. In his reign of about 11 years and a half, 21 tigers and 1 wolf were caught and destroyed. The Valley was now free from tigers.

We have already mentioned the building of some brick temples in this reign. A detailed examination of the architecture of Krishna Temple at Brahmapur Guru Aribam Leikai is called for. Broadly speaking, the architecture is an improved version of the hut type of Bengal popular in the 17th and the 18th centuries. Near this temple, there is another brick

temple of hut type in the homestead of a Labuktongbam Brahmin family. Its age is not yet determined. But we believe that architects from Bengal visited Manipur like so many other places in India.

A three-storied building roofed with sheets of bronze was built for the king in 1705. Roofing with bronze was a novelty. Buildings of those days were mostly roofed with thatch grass (Sanskrit *ulika*; Manipuri *eé*). In 1707, a three-storied temple was built. From the wording of the entry in the Royal Chronicle, we infer that it was built to Vishnu—the image of Vishnu presented by the king of Pong.

Law and order

In this reign there was 1 case of theft and 1 case of murder. The theft was in 1705. Eight thieves were involved. They were drowned in the River Imphal below Shugnu (about 40 miles to the south of Imphal). In the case of murder, the culprit could not be detected. There was panic for some time in the Royal Market. There was strict regulation for some time. The time of beginning the bazar was announced by firing guns and authority closed the bazar early for some days.

Severity of punishment was to some extent responsible for the fewness of crimes. But there were other factors. Life was simple, wants were few, the produce was abundant, lakes and rivers and forests produced more. Above all, the people were more honest. These factors were more important than the severity of the punishment for keeping the society as free from crime as possible.

Robbery, arson, striking of counterfeit coins and offences against women were practically unknown. But there was one instance of private vengeance. In 1698, the family of the king's father-in-law took the law in their own hands and killed an offender. We cannot however call it a recrudesence of private vengeance. It was rather the king's inability to uphold

the majesty of the law as it would affect his father-in-law. This was in sharp contrast to the act of his predecessor and uncle Paikhomba who, when a noble for his private benefit felled timber in a reserve forest, did not hesitate to fetter the noble. Pitambar Charai Rongba, as a king, was weaker than his uncle. There is another instance of failure of justice. In 1704, the government could not detect the person/persons who committed murder in that year. It is very likely that the offender/offenders could not be brought to book, as some one in authority shielded him or them, We believe that this is the reason why there was panic in the bazar for some time.

There were wheels within wheels in Pitambar Charai Rongba's court for some time. Matters came to a head when a *coup d'etat* occurred in 1702 (see the next rubric).

In awarding punishments, the king's government thought of deterrent punishments only. The idea of reforming offenders to turn them into useful subjects of the king did not strike the men at the helm.

Coup d'etat

In 1702, there was an attempt to usurp the throne. The saboteurs succeeded in firing six houses in the palace. They also set fire to the king's residence. There was a persistent rumour implicating four persons by name in the crime of setting fire to the eave of the king's residence. Within a fortnight, the real culprits were found out and 31 persons were executed and some were fined.

An inaccurate forecast

Court astrologers forecast that there would be a lunar eclipse on Tuesday the full moon of Lamda (March 1708). The Royal Chronicle records that the predicted eclipse did not take place. It might be that the eclipse took place but was not visible in Manipur. If the eclipse ended before moonrise in Manipur or began after moonset in Manipur it would

not be visible. The clepsydra of the Manipuris could give only approximate time.

The fact that a forecast was wrong and is recorded as such in the Royal Chronicle proves that other forecasts were correct.

In this reign, there were two solar eclipses, one on Monday the new moon of Lamda (March), 1699 and the other on Thursday the new moon of Hiyangei (about November), 1704. There were two lunar eclipses also, one on Tuesday the full moon of Lamda (March), 1701 and the other on Tuesday, the full moon of Mera (about October), 1707. These eclipses took place as forecast.

Contact with the rest of India

Manipur continued to buy elephants from Tripura and Cachar Pilgrims from other parts of India came to Manipur as before. An ascetic observing the vow of silence (Sanskrit *maunin*) and 21 other pilgrims visited Manipur in 1704. Among the musical instruments of this reign we may mention *karatal* (cymbal), *shinga* (a horn-shaped instrument of copper) and *sahnai* (an instrument like a flute). Use of the last two instruments suggests that Manipur had contact with Bengal.

The coming of Brahmins from other parts of India and their permanent settlement in Manipur is a political barometer. It shows that the relation with the rest of India was good. The architecture of the temples built in this period suggests that Manipur continued to have contact with Bengal.

Tushook rebellion

There was a hill tribe called the Tushooks near the Indo-Burma border. They rose in rebellion against the king in 1702. A force was sent in the last week of Kalen (about May), of that year to put it down ; but it could not reach the nerve-centre of the rebellion and returned to the capital. This was due to the onset of the monsoon. Early in the next year in the middle of Sajibu (about April), another

expedition was sent. There was fighting but the expedition could not achieve the goal. It was thought advisable to withdraw. The Tushooks were left to themselves till the spring of 1708, when an expedition was sent for the third time. A soldier belonging to Kshetrimayum family was killed in action, and the force had to return to the capital. In 1709, in the beginning of Sajibu, the king himself led the expedition against the rebels. The season was most favourable and the rebels were completely defeated. Fifteen of them were brought to the capital as prisoners.

Art and literature

The king was a poet. After his accession, he wrote a book of poems entitled *Leiron* (The Book of Flowers). In this book he sings of about 100 different flowers. The book begins with the most beautiful season of the year—the sweet Spring. The sun gradually moves towards the north. The life-giving vernal rain comes. The first rumbling of the year's first rain-clouds ! Rivers begin to swell. The hills and the Valley are once more verdant. The poet proceeds in this vein.

The poet takes the word flower in a very wide sense. Thus he includes in his book *Ocimum sanctum* (Manipuri *tulasi*) *Santalum album* (Sanskrit *chandana*, Manipuri *chua chandan*). Some of the flowers the poet-king sings of such as *Mimusops elengi* (Sanskrit *bakulam*, Manipuri *bokul*) are really sweet and beautiful ; while some of his flowers such as *Carthamus tinctorious* (Sanskrit *kusumbha*, Manipuri *kusum-lei*) are beautiful though not sweet-scented. But he omits, probably unwittingly, some beautiful, common flowers of Manipur such as *Mesua ferrea* (Sanskrit *nagakesara*, Manipuri *nagesor/nageshor*) and *Pandanus odoratissimus* (Sanskit *ketaki*, Manipuri *ketuki*)*.

* For further reading see author's *A History of Manipuri Literature*. Vol I,

The Manipuris knew very well the art of casting bronze images of gods and goddesses. In this reign some images of Sanamahi (the god of the homestead) and Panthoibi (goddess of war) were cast.

It is probable that *bangdesh* a form of *kirtan* (a form of devotional music) was introduced in the reign. It came from Bengal; *bangdesh* is a slight corruption of Banga Desh (Bengal) The daily worship of Krishna necessitated the singing of devotional music. The necessity gave birth to and fostered *bangdesh*.

Vaishnavism is known to promote the growth of literature wherever it spread. The beginning of the worship of Vishnu in 1470 slowly stimulated interest in Sanskrit literature. The interest helped production of some original Manipuri books in previous reigns. The reign of Pitambar saw the first draft of *Charai Rongba Khungum* a translation of many Sanskrit wise sayings *(subhashita)*. This is the first Manipuri work translated from Sanskrit The king was accompanied by some learned Brahmin pundits in his numerous tours in the countryside. On one such occasion, a Brahmin pundit orally translated many wise Sanskrit sayings. The translation took final shape, in the next reign, as *Charai Rongba Khungum* (Charai Rongba Going To The Countryside).

The reign also saw the writing of *Panthoibi Khongoon* (In Quest of Panthoibi), an original book eulogising Panthoibi, the goddess of war.

Planned invasion of Burma

A daughter of Pitambar was married to the king of Burma. Sometime after the marriage, she was neglected by her husband. This led to some ill-feeling between Manipur and Burma. A little before this incident, the Burmese authorities detained a few Taraos, a hill people on the Indo-Burma border, who were subjects of Manipur. The king asked the king of Burma to repatriate them. The Burmese king having

failed to treat the Manipuri princess properly and to repatriate the Tarao hillmen, the Manipuri king discussed these issues in the court. The court decided to invade Burma to settle the issues. A plan was chalked out.

Soon after the momentous decision of the court, the king was killed by lightning on Sunday the 7th day of Ingen (the last part of June or the beginning of July) 1709. Before his end, he called his son to his side, held his hand and charged him to invade and devastate Burma.

Evaluation of Pitambar's reign

The reign of Pitambar Charai Rongba is the narrow ridge of an important watershed. From this time, the Manipur-Burma relation deteriorated rapidly. The actual outbreak of hostility did not take place in his reign as he died suddenly and prematurely. Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz's (see the next chapter) invasion of Burma was the translation of Pitambar's last wishes into action. Burma retaliated in the second half of the 18th century and the first two decades of the 19th. The Manipuris replied the retaliation by further retaliation in the third decade of the 19th century with British help. The relation between the Burmese and the Manipuris was never happy and the process went on till the final annexation of Burma to the British Empire in 1885. The genesis of the unhappy relation is in the reign of Pitambar.

On the other hand, cultural trends from the rest of India came with greater volume and velocity from this reign onwards. It is true that the initiation of the king and some of his subjects to Vishnavism was the logical outcome of a long process beginning from the reign of Kyamba at the latest. But the initiation produced its own effect also. It further facilitated cultural and political contact with the rest of India.

From the time of Pitambar Charai Rongba, reign-names became much less popular. His predecessors had personal names but they were eclipsed by reign-names. His successors

continued to have reign-names but they were totally eclipsed by personal names. The truth is that the outlook of the Manipuris was undergoing a remarkable change from this reign.

The Manipuris still continued to believe that there was a wolf in the sky which occasionally swallowed the sun and the moon causing solar eclipse and lunar eclipse respectively. On most occasions, it kept only a part of the sun or the moon in its mouth causing partial eclipse ; but on some occasions it swallowed the entire orb causing total eclipse of the sun or the moon, as the case might be, and then gradually vomitted it. In Manipuri *sha* (a loan-word meaning *animal*) is a euphemism for the wolf, the tiger and the leopard which at one time abounded in Manipur and worked havoc. A wolf in the sky causing solar eclipse and lunar eclipse was a belief of the Vedic people. The Manipuris because of their living on the frontier far from the Gangetic valley continued to entertain this ancient belief upto the 18th century But they were now moving with the time. The use of the expression *grahan* to denote eclipse a word used in many Modern Indo-Aryan languages– was about to begin in Manipuri also

From the reign of Pitambar Charai Rongba, homesteads became more well-planned, more sunny, more airy and therefore more hygienic This helped prevent the scourge of smallpox, dysentry and other diseases.

The people of Manipur were fairly affluent In addition to the resources of Manipur, they got tributes from their dependencies in the form of cloths, silk, conchs, cowries and areca-nuts. The spread of Vaishnavism eradicated the evil of alcoholic drinks in the Valley. The Manipuris invested their surplus wealth and spare time in the cultivation of art. Efflorescence of literature, dance and music was round the corner.

The reign of Pitambar Charai Rongba witnessed a great transition. The whole habit and temperament of the Manipuri

people underwent a rapid and phenomenal change. With the end of Pitambar Charai Rongba's reign, we come to the end of the Early Medieval Age of Manipur. With the commencement of the next reign, we pass into Late Medieval Age.

Condition of Manipur

When Ningthouja Principality was established in 33 A D., Nature was very stern and wild in Manipur. The Ningthoujas after making themselves secure were set on taming the environment. We have been following their achievements from the time when they first drained marshes and over-sized lakes and dredged the rivers in the 3rd century A.D.

At the end of the Early Medieval Age, lakes still abounded in Manipur. But they were assets now and not liabilities. Fish of different kinds abounded in them. It supplemented the staple food of the people, rice which, though good in other respects, is somewhat deficient in protein. Migratory acquatic birds like geese, teals and coots visited the lakes in large flocks. Brahminy ducks (Sanskrit *chakravaka*) visited Manipur in small flocks. The Royal Chronicle refers to the kings of Manipur going to the lakes to shoot coots.

The borders of the Valley adjoining the hills were still wooded. So were the small hills inside the Valley like Langon and Chinga. The Royal Chronicle does not usually take notice of smaller animals like wolves and bears.

Monsoon had a tendency to be over-abundant in Early Medieval Age ; but devastating floods were few and far between. The Manipuris controlled flood by using the lakes as vast reservoirs and thus regulating the volume of flow in the rivers. Droughts were extremely rare. In case of a severe drought, however, the Manipuris had the technology to irrigate their fields with river water.

Manipur in the Late Medieval Age did without common vegetables of modern times such as cabbage, potatoes and tomatoes and beautiful and sweet flowers like the rose.

CHAPTER—XIV

GOPAL SINGH GARIB NIWAZ

Pitambar Charai Rongba was succeeded on the throne by his eldest son Gopal Singh also called Mayamba Gopal Singh was crowned on Wednesday the 23rd Thawan (about August), 1709.

Captain R.B. Pemberton, an officer of the East India Company, and Sir Edward Gait say that Garib Niwaz ascended the throne in 1714. With respect, we are unable to agree with them. The Royal Chronicle shall prevail in such matters It clearly gives the date as Wednesday 23 Thawan, 1709

Birth and parentage

Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz alias Mayamba was born on Saturday the 22nd Poinu 1690 The 22nd Poinu falls in December. His mother Nungthin Chaibi was Pitambar Charai Rongba's first wife Mayamba alias Gopal Singh who was later known as Garib Niwaz was Pitambar Charai Rongba's eldest son

When Mayamba alias Garib Niwaz was born, Charai Rongba was far from being the king. He was not even a noble. He was merely the son of the king's brother Mayamba's mother Nungthin Chaibi died on Friday the 27th Inga (roughly June), 1696. This was about a year and a half before Pitambar Charai Rongba came to the throne.

Some books written in English published outside Manipur represent Garib Niwaz as a Naga who embraced Hinduism and founded a long Hindu dynasty. The truth is that Garib Niwaz was a son of Pitambar Charai Rongba's body. The dynasty founded by Pakhangba was not a dynasty of Nagas. Pitambar Charai Rongba belonged to this dynasty.

The mistake originated with the writings of some officers of the East India Company. Their purpose was to give a rough idea about Manipur to their superior officers. They had no access to the original records of the Manipuris.

'Refuge of the poor'

Garib Niwaz means 'Refuge of the Poor'. The king was really kind to the poor. In Inga (about June) 1710, the king and the queen distributed cloth to the weak and the physically handicapped In Ingen (about July) 1714 he sat on a slab of stone in front of the palace and distributed paddy liberally to the weak and the handicapped. These are some of the instances. His development programmes were aimed to benefit the rich and the poor alike. It is from such benevolent acts that he was called Garib Niwaz

By this time Persian was in use throughout India Naturally, some words percolated into Manipuri in the time of Garib Niwaz much in the way modern Manipuris are using *vidai* (farewell) in everyday speech It is from Persian.

Condition of Burma

When Garib Niwaz ascended the throne, the Ningthee was, broadly speaking, the eastern boundary of the dominions of Manipur. Beyond the river lay the kingdom of Ava known to the Manipuris as Awa. To the north of the kingdom lay the Shan kingdoms and to the south were the Mons also known as the Talaings. Burma was not a united country then.

From the time of Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz, conflicts with the trans-Ningthee kingdom of Ava was a regular feature. Conflicts within Burma were going on, and Manipur was marking time for attack.

Envoy from Assam

In 1715, the Ahom king of Assam sent his spiritual preceptor *(guru)* as an envoy. He was accompanied by 39 Vairagees. Normally, a Vairagee means a Vaishnava mendicant. But in this case, the 'Vairagees' were body-guards, attendants and helpers of the envoy, disguised as Vaishnava mendicants for reasons of the journey. The envoy reached the capital city on Monday, 6 Thawan 1715 (Thawan roughly corresponds to August).

Judicial reform

A great advance made in the history of the Manipuri people is Garib Niwaz's judicial reform. Upto the reign of Pitambar Charai Rongba, the kings administered justice sitting on a slab of stone. It was their judgment-seat. *Panthoibi Khongoon*, a book written in Charai Rongba's reign, refers to the king of Manipur as *Kangla ningthouba, thoudu nungpag wayenba* (king at Kangla administrator of justice, sitting on a slab of stone.)* Whether the Manipuris believed that by sitting on the hallowed stone, handed down the generations, the gods would inspire the king with correct judgments or not has not yet been investigated into. But it was a well-established code of conduct that once on the judgment-seat, the king had no friend or foe, no relatives or near and dear ones He must treat all equally. But Gopal Singh saw that if the king himself administered justice, it might not be always possible to do justice. The king was the executive head of the state and in many an important case, reasons of state might dictate the result of the dispute. He therefore entrusted the administration of justice to his nobles.

This memorable reform came into force on 23 Langban 1715 (Saturday). Langban is roughly September.

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*Kangla, the palace of the kings of Manipur—modern cantonment of the Assam Rifles; *thoudu*, stone; *nungpag*, a slab of stone; *wayenba*, administrator of justice.

Flood and famine

There was an unprecedented flood in Mera (about October), 1713. Many premises which were never flooded before were flooded. Ripening rice-crops were submerged. But there was no famine in 1714 because of the buffer-stocks in the Royal Granaries and levy paddy. The king himself went to the granary of his grandmother and obtained a levy of *changang* (reddish rice, which though not liked by townsmen was in great demand among manual workers). The government also distributed rice free to the weak and the disabled.

The harvest of 1714 is not recorded. We believe it was not a bumper harvest harvest. In the lean months (the months just after the rains viz August and September) of 1715, a famine broke out. Farmers guarded standing rice crops at night. A farmer who guarded standing crop of *phougag* (an inferior early variety of paddy harvested in August) was killed in Thawan (roughly August) 1715 by thieves who prowled to steal paddy. Rice was dear. One *pot* (about 59.71 kilogram) of paddy sold at 45 *sels*. Fifteen *pots* (about 895.6 kilograms or roughly 9 quintals) of paddy could purchase a slave. This account of the Royal Chronicle means that some unfortunate men must have sold themselves into slavery to keep body and soul together. The government of course did what they could by distributing rice. No loss of life is recorded. Probably there was no loss of life. The situation began to ease with the harvesting of other and better varieties of early rice crop in autumn. The famine was over with the harvesting of the main rice crop in December. The kingdom had weathered the vagaries of monsoon.

Immigration of Brahmins

The forefathers of the following Manipuri Brahmin families arrived and settled in Manipur in this reign : (1) Goti-mayum (from Shantipur, West Bengal), (2) Anoubam (From Kanya, Kubja, Uttar Pradesh), (3) Hanjabam (again from Kanya Kubja. Uttar Pradesh) (4) Hidang-mayum (from Sonar Dwip Para,

Bengal) and Brahmachari-mayum Anoubam (from Barahanagar, West Bengal).

Initiation to Vaishnavism

Garib Niwaz, following the footsteps of his father, appointed a preacher, Gopaldas, his *guru*. Gopaldas was not a resident of Manipur. He was one of the pilgrims who visited Manipur every year. He initiated the king and many others to Vaishnavism in Mera (about October) 1717 The form of Vaisnavism to which they were initiated worshipped Krishna as the Supreme Deity. The king followed this form of Vaishnavism for about 18 years.

Preaching of Vaisnavism was now on a larger scale. Ascetics, pilgrims. Brahmins and other people arrived as before but in larger numbers. Cultural contact with Assam was maintained. Vaishnavism became the state religion.

Some temples were built and dedicated to Krisna. Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz introduced a great religious reform of far-reaching consequences. Guru Gopaldas went back from Manipur on Wednesday 25 Thawan 1720. Thawan roughly corresponds to August.

Wars with Burma : Background

In 1717 January 156 messengers from Burma headed by 6 inhabitants of Samjok arrived in the capital with a fresh proposal for marrying of the princess royal of Manipur to the king of Burma[1]. From the Manipuri point of view, this was a fresh insult. Garib Niwaz ironically said that the princess would be given in marriage and in the same vein directed the Burmese messengers to request their king to receive the princess at the confluence of the River Ru and the River Ningthee on the appointed day[2]. The Ru is called the Yu by the Burmese. As soon as the Burmese envoys left for their country, he addressed the court from the throne and narrated how his father charged him to devastate Burma[3]. He announced his firm determination to invade Burma[4].

Another complication arose at this time. Samjok was a dependency of Manipur. So was Mangsha. The chief of Samjok attacked Mangsha to foray[5]. Intelligence reached the king in this behalf sometime before the meeting of the court. Immediate action was necessary to punish Samjok. The king informed the court accordingly.

A plan was now chalked out in detail. The king gave the strategy. The attack on the Burmese and the expedition to Samjok were to be combined. The vanguard was to proceed to the confluence of the Ru and the Ningthee. The rear-guard was to camp at Panthoibi Reserve Forest. The vanguard was to attack the Burmese and defeat them. After that it was to meet the rearguard and then the whole army was to reach Samjok and lay siege to its capital. The aim was to lay the siege for, if necessary, 7 years. The Manipuris were prepared accordingly[6].

Outbreak of hostilities

The messengers reported to their king that the Manipuri king would give his daughter in marriage. The Burmese king sent a large number of men and ladies, with a strong contingent of the army, to receive the Manipuri princess and her retinue. On the appointed day, the Burmese party and the Manipuri party met each other on the appointed river port. But there was no Manipuri princess. Instead, there were armed Manipuri soldiers.

The Manipuri vanguard now received a message, sent by smoke and gun shots, that the rearguard had taken up position in Panthoibi Reserve Forest. Without much ceremony, the Manipuri vanguard fell on the Burmese. The Burmese used guns and bows and arrows. So did the Manipuris, In addition, the Manipuris used rockets, which put the

1. RC p. 65. 2. NL 3, 4 and 5 Samjok Ngamba.
6 Condensed from *Samjok Ngamba.*

Burmese to flight. They broke the ordinary Burmese boats with axes and fired the decorated Burmese royal boat and sent it ablaze drifting down the Ningthee[7].

The Manipuris took 90 Burmese men and 11 ladies prisoner[8]. The vanguard joined the rearguard and gave a full report[9]. A small contingent was sent to the capital to give the war news[10]. The entire army (minus the contingent) proceeded to Samjok[11].

Samjok punished[12]

When the Manipuri army reached Samjok, there was a sharp but brief fighting between it and a contingent of the Samjok militia. After defeating the contingent, the Manipuri army laid siege to the capital of Samjok. The inhabitants of the town got their supplies of salt from a nearby brine-spring and supplies of firewood from a wood not far off. The Manipuri army closely guarded the paths to both and deprived the people of these necessaries.

To make the blockade total, the next move of the Manipuris was to occupy the town of Chanda on the Ningthee This was to cut the supplies of rice which came from there to Samjok. But the move required crossing of Ango hill, infested with leopards and negotiating a treacherous ravine. Undaunted, Garib Niwaz, with a small force, crossed the ravine by an improvised bridge of bamboos, crossed the hill and reached the Ningthee. Then at night, in moonlight. he and his team of intrepid men rowed down the Ningthee on a boat and reached Chanda. They waited till daybreak on the bank. It was the dead of winter. At dawn, the whole town was engulfed in dense fog. Under the cover of the fog, Garib Niwaz attacked the town and occupied it. Its chief, who tried to escape by boat, was chased and killed ; for he helped Samjok with a portion of his army.

7, 9, 10, 11 and 12. From *Samjok Ngamba*. 8. RC.

The lifeline of Samjok was now cut. The blockade was now total. Garib Niwaz and his men burnt Chanda and returned to Samjok. The besieged people having nothing else to eat subsisted on horseflesh and boiled leaves now. Starved for a long time, they could no longer walk. They staggered only ; and moved like fish in poisoned water. At this stage the Manipuris fired a rocket into the town. The object was to make the besieged people panic. The rocket puffing out sparks and smoke chanced to fall at the court-yard of some influential ladies. Panic-stricken, they spread panic. The besieged people met in a meeting and forced the prince to agree to surrender.

The prince surrendered and agreed to pay tribute in gold and silver. After the surrender the people of the town entreated the Manipuri king to feed them with rice. The king acceded to their request and fed them with rice.*

The war **

The king of Burma sent a large well-equipped force to retaliate and to avenge the insult – the burning of his boat by the Manipuris and sending it burning drifting down the Ningthee. The report of their advance reached the Manipuri capital a little before midnight. Garib Niwaz ordered his troops to be ready within one 'hour' (*wanglen*). An 'hour' of the Manipuris consisted of about 22½ minutes of our time.

The king himself led his troops in person. The king started from the capital on Sunday the full moon of Phairen, 1718 It was at midnight. The troops proceeded on horseback via

**Samjok Ngamba*, is a book written in Garib Niwaz's reign, dealing in detail with his first two battles with Burma and the conquest of Samjok.

**Condensed from *Samjok Ngamba*. But the dates, figures and names of the heroes are from the Royal Chronicle.

Wangkhei and Sallungpham. They reached Mangsha and intercepted the Burmese. It was a pitched battle. The Burmese were determined. The weather was foggy also.

A Manipuri officer Haobam Pukhramba died in action. Neither the Burmese nor the Manipuris retreated an inch. Garib Niwaz danced a short, terrific spear dance. Then dancing a terrible sword dance, he ordered his men to pounce on the Burmese. Braving Burmese arrows and bullets, the Manipuris drove their horses furiously towards Burmese positions and threw their javelins. A Manipuri hero, Lamthok of Polem family, drove right upto the Burmese ranks and threw them into disarray. The Manipuris then fired their rockets which flew into Burmese ranks like meteors of fire. The Burmese fled in disorder and hid themselves at different places.

Mopping-up operation began. The Royal Chronicle records that 157 Burmese were caught and 160 muskets and 10 horses were captured. The whole operation took only 9 days. On reaching the capital the king rewarded Lamthok of Polem family suitably.

Simultaneous Burmese and Tripuri Invasion

The Burmese king Taninganwe sent an army to invade Manipur. Exactly at this time the prince of Tripura also sent an army to invade Manipur. It was a grave situation. Reports of the two invasions reached the capital simultaneously..

An emergency session of the king's court was summoned. In it, the king declared from the throne. "During the the reigns of our ancestors, no part of our territory was ceded to any neighbouring power by oblitering the boundary line and removing the boundary pillars. We will fight the king of Burma and the prince of Tripura".

According to the king's direction, some nobles went to the south-west to halt the advance of the Tripuris and some, to

the east to repel the Burmese. In the east, the Manipuris found that the Burmese had come 'in countless numbers like a great flood of humanity'. The Manipuris fought bravely but the Burmese were getting the upperhand by force of numbers. The Manipuris sent an urgent message to the king.

Garib Niwaz discussed the war situation in the court. He asked "Is it the opinion of the court that we should give our eldest daughter in marriage to the king of Burma and conclude a treaty ? Or is it the opinion of the court that we should engage the Burmese in hand to-hand fighting ?" The court decided to a man to fight the Burmese.

The king gave the strategy—to fight the Burmese first and to tackle the Tripuri invasion later on and in the mean-time, to send some reinforcement to check its advance. The king himself went to repel the Burmese. Hillmen armed with spears belonging to the Tangkhul, the Koireng, the Thangal, the Kabui, the Shong, the Maring and the Tarao tribes also joined the plainsmen soldiers who went with the king.

The Burmese advanced upto Wangjing. The Manipuris halted their advance there. The Burmese began the attack. Their war-elephants advanced leading the entire array of Burmese troops. Their guns boomed. They fired their muskets and shot their arrows. The Manipuris replied. They fired their rockets, which attacked the enemy like meteors, rained arrows and bullets and boomed their guns from specially prepared stands. They goaded their elephants and spurred their horses.

Garib Niwaz sat on a high platform of bamboo commanding a panoramic view of the battlefield and directed the operation from there. The Burmese rushed a fresh wave of war-elephants to the vanguard. The animals surged towards the Manipuris. It was a critical moment.

Garib Niwaz called aloud "All warriors of Manipur! You shall not retreat!... In the reign of our ancestor Khagemba, the king of Burma invaded Manipur; but countless Burmese were caught like small fries in a big net... In our reign, even a king of the prowess of Yama (god of death) shall not enter this golden land as an enemy—let alone this petty king of Burma! You shall not retreat!"*

The heroes of Manipur raised their war-cry. They gripped their spears firmly, whipped their horses, and charged the Burmese. They completely broke up the enemy ranks. The battle was won. The Manipuris captured 3 Burmese war-elephants and killed and captured Burmese counted 2,000. An urgent message came from Kwakta where the Manipuris were checking the advance of the Tripuris. It was an urgent request for reinforcement. The king sent a strong contingent under Keibi Ram Singh, the commander-in-chief (Manipuri *senapati*). The contingent reached Kwakta by a short cut. But the king returned to the capital with the remainder of the army.

At Kwakta, the commander-in-chief sent the Takshen *lambu* (expert on Tripura affairs) to the Tripuri camp as an envoy to ascertain (i) why the Tripuris invaded Manipur (ii) the names and other particulars of the commanders of the Tripuri invading army and (iii) the terms on which the Tripuris would agree to withdraw from Manipur without further fighting. The envoy returned with information on all the points. But information on the first two points need not detain us here. Regarding the third point, the Tripuris demanded 15 horses as tribute and delivery of Swarupananda, Brahmin Hanjaba (a dignitary) as a hostage. The commander-in-chief in a confidential letter referred the question of tribute to the king, who wrote back to the commander-in-chief for his comments. The commander-in-chief was for fighting and repelling the

*This is an actual translation of the king's order.
The figures are from the Royal Chronicle.

Tripuris. He sent Swarupananda himself to the king with a request to come personally. When Swarupananda reached the capital, he was closeted with the king, who assured him with these words "Not to speak of a Brahmin pundit like you, we will not deliver to the Tripuris even a grasshoper as a hostage". The king summoned the court and asked who among the heroes would fight the Tripuris as if it were his sole responsibility. A hero Cheksa Chakrapani Thangjaba volunteered. The king sent him to Kwakta as the advance party.

At Kwakta, with the certainty of the arrival of massive reinforcement within a day, the commander-in-chief sent an ultimatum to the Tripuris to withdraw forthwith failing which they would not be allowed later on to leave Manipur alive. The Manipuris got the intelligence that the Tripuris would take the offensive the next dawn.

At dawn, the Manipuris took the offensive to forestall the enemy and at the same time a Manipuri reconnaisance party fanned out. The Tripuris shifted their position. They moved towards the hill on the west to outflank the Manipuris and attack them from the rear. The Manipuri reconnaissance party noticed it and reported immediately. The Manipuris changed their direction, now moved in a line parallel to Thangjing hill and met the Tripuris.

The Manipuris found that the terrain was hilly and crossed by brooks and therefore unsuitable for their cavalry, their forte. Simulating to retreat. they lured the Tripuris to a wide open plain. Once the plain was reached the Tripuris were no match for the Manipuri cavalry. The Manipuris were getting the upper hand. But it was nearing sunset. The battle began at peep-of-day. At sunset, the two armies retired to their respective camps for the night.

At night, Garib Niwaz arrived with a powerful, well-equipped force. Getting the news of the king's arrival, the Tripuris fled at night. According to *Takshen Ngamba*, a book

written in Garib Niwaz's (see *post*) time, some more Tripuri leaders were killed and some muskets including 3 Ramjangees (a superior type of muskets much prized by the Manipuris) were captured in the mopping-up operation. It is recorded there that those who fled throwing aside their arms were not chased or killed. Garib Niwaz returned to the capital.

The news of the victory reached the capital before the king. The simultaneous invasion by the Burmese and the Tripuris was now repulsed with heavy losses to the Burmese and moderate losses to the Tripuris. The king was given an ovation at Moirangkhom. The victory parade started from the mound there and reached Kangla.*

Cause of Manipuri victory

What were the causes of Manipuri victory over the Burmese and the Tripuris when they invaded Manipur simultaneously? First of all we must mention good generalship. As a general Garib Niwaz was second to none. We saw his quality as a general at the siege of Sanjok. His crossing of the Ango hill, his advance on Chanda by boat in moonlight and his sending of a rocket into the besieged town are fine examples of good generalship. We find the same good generalship at the Battle of Wangjing when he directed the whole Manipuri operation from a high platform and at his sending timely reinforcements to Kwakta till the Burmese were defeated. After the defeat of the Burmese, the defeat of the Tripuris was a foregone conclusion. Next we must mention the good quality of the king at the critical time. When the situation was tense when the news of the simultaneous invasion by two powers spread like wildfire he conducted the proceedings of the court admirably well. When some ladies of Yaiskul asked him where they would evacuate to, he gave a clear-cut reply advising them to spend the time happily buying and selling in the Royal Market. His assurance to Swarupananda is another instance of good kingship. Then we must add good soldiery. The soldiers of Manipur were not

*Our account is an abridgement of *Takshen Ngamba*

mercenaries. They were patriots. They put up with all hardship and attacked the enemy disregarding personal safety.

Garib Niwaz inherited a good organisation. Manipur was a well-organised state from before his time. There was the system for sending quick reports by horsemen. The roads were extensive, straight and wide. There was also the system of intelligence. The Manipuri army had a reconnoitring party. The Manipuris had a good weapon also viz. the rocket. The rocket of the Manipuris propelled by burning solid fuel and launched from a specially prepared high base may be a toy by modern standards. But in the early decades of the 18th century, it was a novel weapon in this part of India and Upper Burma. Its fire was not as powerful as Greekfire. But it was sufficient to frighten Burmese war-elephants and put them to flight. Fired in sufficient numbers, they swooped down like swallows on enemy troops, burnt their clothes and threw them into disarray. At these psychological moments, Manipuri troops attacked them with other weapons and put them to flight.

Last but not the least, there was the good counsel and wisdom of the Manipuri court. In the time of Garib Niwaz, we are on the threshold of Modern Age of the history of Manipur, which began in 1819. The king asked the members to speak freely. The tenor of the discussion is most interesting The members spoke with patriotism, wisdom and courage.

Weapons and war techniques

The analysis of the factors for Manipuri victory over the Burmese and the Tripuris even though the combatant population of Manipur was very small in comparison to that of Burma, may be supplemented by a comparative study of the weapons and war techniques of the three peoples. The Burmese used bows and arrows in addition to muskets. They used war-elephants, which led their entire array. They used some horses for their army officers to ride on.

But we find no evidence of their use of cavalry against the Manipuris Their forte was the numerical strength of their army. In any pitched battle, they hoped to win by force of numbers.

The Tripuris used cowries as their bullets They too used bows and arrows, swords, and spears in addition to muskets. In the invasion of Manipur early in 1724, they showed military skill by using outflanking movement They fought well in hilly terrain. They did not use war-elephants in this invasion They had a sprinkling of Muslim gunners who were considered to be experts. The sheet anchor of the Tripuris was their infantry

The Manipuris used some muskets in addition to bows and arrows, swords and spears and shields Their strong point was their intrepid cavalry Some of the Manipuri shields of the time of Garib Niwaz were round and made of the hide of rhinoceros (Manipuri *ganda/shamu ganda*) The Manipuri king held such a shield Their javelins were meant for war and not for sports Their spears had very long handles The Manipuris used rockets also

Liquid fuel for rockets came to be used only in modern times. The Manipuris called their rocket *meikappi* or Shooting Fire The name is apt It sent out a continuous jet of bright sparks reminiscent of the evening star. Manipuri poets sang of their rocket as *thaba lanjen meikappi* (Shooting Fire, reminiscent of the evening star, inducing the enemy to flee from battle) What substance in the fuel made the sparks or some of the sparks incandescent to resemble the evening star ? Probably the Manipuris kept the composition of the fuel, which was a mechanical mixture, a secret like the Byzantine Greeks who kept the composition of Greekfire a top secret for hundreds of years But it is found out now with approximate accuracy. The composition of the fuel of the rocket of the Manipuris may also be looked into

Further wars with Burma

In Poinu (about December) 1724 the Burmese came to invade Manipur. A strong force was sent under Haobam Pukhramba towards Mangsha· to intercept them. Another force was sent under Haobam Sagolsenba Hanjaba towards the Ningthee for the same purpose. The Burmese were repulsed before they reached Manipur. In 1735-36, Garib Niwaz invaded and conquered Myedu (broadly Latitude 22 N and Longitude 95·50 E) on the banks of the Mu. On Monday, 10 Mera (about October) 1735 the symbolical start was held by taking out his horses and elephants But the actual start was on Sunday, 12 Poinu (about December) 1735. Shantidas the king's *guru* also accompanied him. After conquering Myedu, the king returned with 130 Burmese prisoners of war. He reached the capital on Tuesday, 4 Phairen (about February) 1736. Myedu is referred to as Metu in the Royal Chronicle.

In 1737, the Manipuris again invaded Burma. On Thursday, 10 Mera (about October) the symbolical start was held Shyam Sain the king's eldest son started for the invasion of Burma on Tuesday, 11 Poinu about December). Shantidas accompanied him. Six days later, another force started for the same purpose. All the Manipuri forces returned about one month after successfully invading Burma. Early in 1738, there was a skirmish between the Manipuri troops and Burmese troops. 327 Burmese were killed and 20 were caught alive.

On Sunday 6 Phairen 1738, the king accompanied by his preceptor started to invade Burma. He reached Thangbichrou (Burmese town ?) But without any apparent reason he returned to the capital. On Sunday, 11 Poinu of the same year, a Manipuri force under Shyam Sain invaded Burma. They returned to the capital after 48 days. Burmese records say that in 1738, Garib Niwaz again crossed the Ningthee and

dispersed the Burmese army of 15,000 foot, 3,000 horse and 30 elephants. We do not find it in Manipuri records. Did Burmese chroniclers confuse Shyam Sain with his father?

On Sunday, 13 Poinu (about December) 1739 Garib Niwaz started to invade Sagaing (21 51′N 96′E) He crossed the Ningthee and invaded a Burmese town called Tabang by the Manipuris. *Ningthourol Lambuba* claims that after defeating the Burmese army, the Manipuris captured 6 elephants, 100 horses and 1 000 muskets. This is not found in the Royal Chronicle. Then going via 'the prosperous region of Shopret Pagoda where gold and silver were plentiful' he reached Sagaing on the Irrawady, the then capital of Burma. He occupied Sagaing. He forced his entry into Kaungmudaw Pagoda which had four doors, to kill the garrison kept there. The old door of the eastern entrance to the pagoda bore upto the Second World War the marks made by Garib Niwaz with his sword as a mark of conquering Sagaing. According to the Royal Chronicle Garib Niwaz burnt Sagaing. He got horses, elephants, cows, buffaloes, costly silk cloth and much gold and silver as booty.

Garib Niwaz planted the standard of Manipur at Sagaing claiming that his dominion was upto that city. How many troops accompanied him in the Battle of Sagaing cannot hitherto be ascertained from Manipuri records, but according to Burmese records he had a force of 20,000 men. According to Manipuri records, in the invasion of Sagaing, Garib Niwaz carried at the head of his force a standard of white cloth on which an image of Hanuman was drawn. Garib Niwaz was accompanied by his eldest son Shyam Sain. At one critical stage of the fight he helped his father by a stratagem with considerable risk to his life. He fixed a decorated, big, white umbrella (an insignia of royalty) and sat beneath it. The Burmese aimed their guns at him thinking that he was the king of Manipur. Garib Niwaz thus supervised the operation with a freer mind and much less risk. Sagaing was

known to the Manipuris as Chekyang The Irrawady (called the Airavati by the Manipuris) was believed to be a branch of the Ganga

Kingdom of Pong

In a previous chapter we saw the help rendered by the Shan kingdom of Pong in the conquest of Kyang. We also saw in another chapter that the king of Pong presented Khagemba with a sapling of the guava tree to help cure the Manipuris of dysentry Now, on account of the rise of the ethnic Burmese, the Shan kingdom of Pong was in danger. In March 1739, the Pongs requested Manipur to help them fight the Burmese The envoys from Pong returned to their country after about 19 days In August of the same year, the envoys came again after consulting their authority They returned to their country in November They were given the most cordial treatment Manipur promised to invade Burma 13 days after they left, Garib Niwaz started for Burma to invade Sagaing

After the Battle of Sagaing, Garib Niwaz made the elder brother of the king of Pong king and gave him all the insignia of royalty as presents To the younger brother of the new king of Pong, Garib Niwaz gave all the insignia of a king's brother as presents These were acts of friendship

In April 1740, Garib Niwaz sent 2 elephants to the king of Pong as presents In June, the king of Pong and his queen paid a visit to Manipur. On the last day of Inga (about the end of June), a boat-race was held in honour of the visiting dignitaries The image of Vishnu (the image presented by the king of Pong in 1470) was in a boat, Garib Niwaz was in another boat and the king of Pong was in a third boat and they witnessed the boat-race. About 18 days later, the king of Pong and his queen were given a reception by the king and the queen of Manipur where the prominent item served was mango.

When the king of Pong left for his home, a palanquin, a white umbrella and sword with a gilded hilt—all parts of royal insignia were presented to him.

In Phairen (about February) 1746, the queen of Pong paid a visit to Manipur. It appears that Pong was in distress. Its enemies were attacking it every now and then. On Sunday 28 Sajibu (about the last week of April) 1746, the king's brother was sent to Pong to restore law and order and to help stabilise the kingdom. It appears that he returned to the capital in March, 1747. It was the last act of Manipur to express its feelings of friendship to the kingdom of Pong. The friendship began in 1470 and had continued for over 270 years through thick and thin. But now it was fast drawing to a close. Unknown to everyone a cataclysm was coming.

Invasion of Tripura

It may be recalled that in 1724 the Burmese and the Tripuris invaded Manipur simultaneously. According to the Royal Chronicle, 9 divisions of Burmese troops and 7 divisions of Tripuri troops came. According to Burmese records relied on by Major Burney (see Chapter XIX *post*) and Captain Dun in his *Gazetteer of Manipur* the invading Burmese troops numbered 30,000. Manipur retaliated upon Burma as we have seen. To retaliate upon Tripura, Garib Niwaz sent in 1727 a force under Ahallup Lakpa of Haobam family and Prince Wangkheirakpa. Shantidas also accompanied them. The prince of Tripura desired peace. The expeditionary force accordingly returned and reached the capital on Wednesday 13 Poinu, (about December).

On Monday 11 Poinu (about December) 1734 Garib Niwaz started to invade Tripura. The reason is not recorded. The Manipuri troops encamped at Sekchai at the confluence of 3 rivers. They stormed Chainu and conquered the Tripuris led by Satrajit Narayan. The king returned to the capital on Monday, 7 Wakching (about the beginning of January) with 1,100 prisoners of war.

Worship of Rama

Garib Niwaz's form of Vaishnavism was at first Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism. Another form of Vaishnavism referred to as Nimandi in the Royal Chronicle was also current in Manipur. We believe Nimandi was the form of Vaishnavism preached by Nimbarka, a South Indian Brahmin, who migrated to Vrindaban and preached from there. Apart from these two forms, another form, referred to as Ramandi in the Royal Chronicle, was making headway in the capital. Its spearhead was Shantidas, a preacher cum politician. He arrived in Manipur via Sylhet a little before 1724. We meet him for the first time in the Royal Chronicle in Wakching (roughly January), 1722. *Takshen Ngamba* makes it clear that he was already in the good book of the king in January, 1724 when the Burmese and the Tripuris invaded Manipur simultaneously.

Shantidas argued before the king that Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism was a very high religion but the masses would not be able to follow it. He took good care not to offend the feelings of the king and his subjects. He said that he regarded Chaitanya as an incarnation of Krishna but added that his teachings were too good for this world. He compared Chaitanya's school to a delicate beautiful woman, the obvious implication being that it was effeminate.

Shantidas's argument gradually gained ground. He accompanied the king on many tours and some military expeditions. Ultimately, the king switched over to the worship of Rama as his religion and the religion for his subjects. The image of Rama and Sita founded by him is still worshipped in a temple near a big pond in Imphal known as Ningthem Pukhri (Royal Pond). He also carved out in 1729 an image of Hanuman in relief on a big slab of stone. The stone with the image forms the northern wall of a Hanuman temple built by him at Mahabali in Imphal. The temple was inaugurated in Hiyangei 1729.

The image of Hanuman and the Hanuman temple are still in a very good condition The temple is quite near Krishna Temple built by Pitambar Charai Rongba

Literature

The long, peaceful and prosperous reign of Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz was pre-eminently suitable for efflorescence of literature In this Valley literature took root early But it saw a new horizon in the reign of Garib Niwaz The greatness of Sanskrit literature was now available to the Manipuri reader or listener through adaptations

Garib Niwaz was no theorist Once he believed a thing to be good or correct, he applied it straight to practice The good of the people being uppermost in his mind, for their salvation, he ordered a writer of his court to adapt the Ramayana from Bengali One day he addressed his court explaining the benefits of listening to the Ramayana ' But the great book Ramayana" he said, "is in the unfamiliar language of Bengal Most people of Manipur will not understand it So, Treasurer Kshema Singh ! Adapt it in Manipuri so that most people may know it"[1] In the course of some years only, the entire Ramayana of seven cantos was adapted in Manipuri from Krittivasa's Bengali recension It is no mean achievement.

Earlier in the reign, Garib Niwaz adapted *Parikshit* in Manipuri from Gangadas Sen's *Mahabharata* Gangadas Sen, Shashthivara Sen's son, lived in Jhinargram in the District of Dacca (now in Bangla Desh) Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz was a writer of some ability In the colophon of *Parikshit* he writes "This nectar –the story of Krishna from Shri Bharat— was composed in a vernacular by Gangadas Sen, son of Shashthivara Sen, to enable human beings to get salvation. This is the verse composed in Manipuri by a Kshatriya of

1 Adi kanda of Manipuri Ramayan pp 2 to 4

Manipur, Garib Niwaz Manipureshwar Ningthouren Shri Shriyukta, Gopal Singh Mayamba"[2]. Manipureshwar means the king of Manipur. Ningthouren means emperor. Mayamba means the Conqueror of Cachar.

Still earlier, Garib Niwaz wrote *Lakshmi Charit*. It was a dialogue between Krishna and Lakshmi. The latter described the different types of women mentioning which type she liked most.

Samjok Ngamba (Conquest of Samjok), *Takshen Ngamba* (Conquest of the Tripuris) and *Sanamahi Laikan* (Divinely Saved By Sanamahi) are among the original works of this reign. *Samjok Ngamba* is a narrative poem composed jointly by two poets one of whom accompanied the king in his expedition to Samjok. *Takshen Ngamba* is also a contemporaneous work. *Charai Rongba Khungum* (Charai Rongba Going To The Countryside), a translation, took final shape in this reign.

Love of Manipuri

There was a belief in a certain section of the people of Bengal that the 18 principal puranas and the story of Rama should be heard from Sanskrit only. If one heard them from a vernacular, one would go to hell. They quoted a couplet of very doubtful authority *ashtadasha puranani ramasya charitani cha/bhashayam shrutwa manavah roura am narakam vrajet*[3]. There was also a belief that Krittivasa and Kashidasa who rendered the Ramayana and the Mahabharata respectively into Bengali were totally ruined[4]. The king Garib Niwaz and the people of his time did not believe in these sayings and went ahead with adaptation from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

Rama's worship of Devi ?

In modern printed texts of Krittivasi Rámayana, Rama is made to worship Devi to kill Ravana. But the fountainhead of all recensions of the Ramayana is the Valmiki Rama-

2. Parikshit. p. 90. See p. 12 also. 3 and 4 HBLL p. 7.

yana. It does not countenance the story of Rama's worship of Devi widely prevalent in Bengal. In the Ramayana adapted in Garib Niwaz's reign, Rama does not worship Devi but conquers Ravana by his own prowess. It is said that in earlier editions of Krittivasi Ramayana upto the Serampore edition, Rama does not worship Devi.

Development works

We have seen Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz as a general and as a warrior. Let us now look at him as a statesman developing his kingdom. Upto his father's time, the numerous salt springs were just salt-springs. Rainwater percolated through the soil into the salt-water in the spring. Garib Niwaz turned all salt-springs into salt-wells by inserting cylinders of a certain kind of wood. By chemical reaction the wood became as hard as stone and impervious. The percentage of salt in the salt-water in the wells increased. The same quantity of salt could now be manufactured with less labour, less firewood in less time. Although not known at that time. Manipuri salt (the salt from the salt-wells of Manipur) contains calcium chloride and magnesium chloride besides sodium chloride. The measure of Garib Niwaz cannot be over-estimated.

He constructed river bunds almost throughout the entire course of the River Imphal to prevent floods. He dug up the old course of the Nambul river passing through Sagolband and turned it into a useful boat-way. Incidentally, it supplied an important section of the capital with fish.

In 1726, he excavated in Imphal a big pond 600 feet in length (the breadth is not given in the Royal Chronicle). It has been serving the people as a comparatively safe source of water for more than two and a half centuries. It is still in, a very good condition. It is called Ningthem Pukhri or Royal Pond (Manipuri *ningthem* royal ; *pukhri/pukhari* pond from Sanskrit *pushkarini*). In his reign smaller ponds were dug in some suburbs also. In July in 1713, he planted trees along roads. A bridge was built over the River Imphal at Singjamei in 1727.

In 1714 he improved the highway upto Tengnoupan. In 1716 he improved the road upto Kongba In 1734 he improved the road from Uchiwa to Leisangkhong He forbade keeping pigs, hens or cocks in the capital city—a welcome measure from the standpoint of hygiene Cremation grounds were provided in wide open spaces—another good measure from the standpoint of hygiene

He built brick walls round the palace and dug a moat round the brick walls The digging of the moat was begun 1729 and continued in 1730 He opened new bazars at important centres in the countryside, and in 1730, the Morning Market in the capital near the palace Trade and commerce increased He pumped into circulation thousands of square, bronze coins (Manipuri *tangka*, Sanskrit *tangkakam* stamped coin) to meet the requirements of the expanding economy The metal of the coins was partly from old coins of previous reigns no longer legal tender He introduced square coins with effect from Friday 25 Kalen 1734 The legend is mostly in Manipuri script and the lettering, very distinct and superior

In the previous reigns the borders of the Valley adjoining the hills were left wooded or covered with grass jungle Tigers and elephants roamed there The Manipuris used to buy elephants from Burma and Tripura formerly Burma and Tripura being at war with Manipur, this was not possible now So elephants were caught from the border strips at the foot of hills. Thus 28 elephants were caught near Yairipog in 1716, 23 elephants near Phougagchou in 1728, 3 elephants near Chairen in 1735 and 11 elephants near Moirang in 1737 This enabled the Valley to support a larger population by extending human habitation although it created temporary problems Being deprived of habitation tigers and wild elephants sneaked into human habitation But they were caught and killed.

The pineapple rich in vitamins and some nine minerals is a gift of the Portuguese to India. In the Royal Chronicle,

the pineapple is mentioned for the first time in August 1732. When the king went on a pleasure tour to eat pineapple. Obviously it was introduced into Manipur in Garib Niwaz's reign. The Manipuris took up its cultivation. About 80 years after the death of Garib Niwaz an English officer of the East India Company, R.B. Pemberton, said of the pineapple "in Muneepoor it attains a degree of excellence not surpassed in any part of the world". The care with which the Manipuris cultivated the pineapple is paying dividends now. It is earning some foreign exchange besides satisfying domestic needs.

The pineapple is called *nanas* in Brazilian. From it. the Portuguese call it *ananas*. In most languages of India, the pineapple is called by names derived from Portuguese *ananas*, such as *anaras*, *anaros*, *ananas*. In Manipuri in Garib Niwaz's time, it was *kiyom* derived from Sanskrit *keura*. It is now called *kihom*.

Drawbacks of the reign

No one is free from mistakes. Garib Niwaz too committed mistakes. Among his mistakes we may mention religious persecution. For example, he fined followers of Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism. Likewise, followers of Nimbarka's school of Vaishnavism were persecuted. Followers of this school, if Brahmins were banished to Cachar ; if members of the royal class, were stripped of their office ; if commoners were transported to a penal settlement. The relevant entries in the Royal Chronicle on these events make us sorry for him. His object was to propagate the form of Vaisnavism worshipping Rama as the Supreme Being. The end was good ; the means was bad. He achieved great results and these results would be greater still had he followed pure means. The bad means turned into a boomerang in the last days of his reign.

The last years

Shantidas, the religious guru of the king died on Tuesday 27 Hiyangei 1744 in Burma. The king still continued his

development activities by, for example, constructing river bunds along parts of the Imphal and the Irin rivers. Envoys from Pong still arrived. But he had passed his meridian. On Wednesday, 10 Kalen (about May) 1748, he abdicated in favour of Chit Sain, a son of his. Thus a long momentous reign crowded with memorable events came to an end.

Assessment of Garib Niwaz's reign

The reign of Garib Niwaz saw the transition of Manipur from Early Medieval Age to Late Medieval Age. Vestiges of ancient and medieval times such as a belief in the existence of a cosmic wolf causing solar and lunar eclipse lingered for some time more. People still believed that it was sometimes possible to prevent an eclipse by proper incantation. But on the whole, the kingdom was moving towards modern age. From this reign onwards, the Manipuris entered in the Royal Chronicle the timing of some eclipses visible in Manipur and some earthquakes felt in Manipur. Since seismographs were not in existence then, they did not record the intensity of the shocks or the epicentre. But the record of the timing and the date of earthquakes and eclipses is a very welcome information. So is the record of the appearance of comets.

Relations with the rest of India further deepened. Good relations with Assam and Bengal continued. People from Orissa, far off in those days, visited Manipur with *prasad* of Jagannath. Pilgrimages from Manipur to the Ganga became a little more frequent. There was cultural contact with what is now Uttar Pradesh exemplified by the beginning of the worship of Rama in Manipur, such names of princes as Bharat Sain and Satrughna Sain, popularity of the worship of Hanuman and the issue of some coins by Garib Niwaz with a legend in Hindi in Deva Nagari script. Some such coins coming down to us read *Jai Garib Nawaz Mekhaleshwar Gomati Rani se* (Jai Garib Nawaz Mekhaleshwar with Rani Gomati)

From this reign onwards, Manipur became a decidedly cleaner place. This partly explains the occurrence of only

one major smallpox epidemic, which was in Inga 1720. Lakes gradually silted up helping expansion of population. But Takyen in Imphal was still marshy. The king went there in 1744 to enjoy the sight of *kombirei* (a beautiful flower closely akin to *Iris germanica* thriving in marshy situations). Modern Palace area (not to be confused with Kangla) was still a shallow lake called Guru Pat (Guru Lake), abounding in lotus blooms. Food was plentiful, good and cheap. This combined with practically unpolluted air, plenty of sunshine and water gave health and longevity. Some people lived upto 92 years or even 95 years[5]. Judged by the statue of Garib Niwaz at the temple of Ramji Prabhu at Ningthem Pukhri, men of this reign were stalwart. All these factors helped the Manipuris in their fight with the Burmese.

The greatest drawback of Manipur throughout the ages up till now has been the smallness of the population. In the reign of Garib Niwaz also, inspite of the falling death-rate and reclamation of jungle to support a larger population, the population was very small in comparison to that of Burma. The Manipuris had conquered and devastated all important towns and villages on the Ningthee, the Mu and the Airavati upto Ava (very nearly Latitude 21°53' N, Longitude 96° E). But where was the manpower to consolidate the fairly extensive conquests ?

Manipur was pinched with the smallness of population. This was so even after judicious management of manpower by entrusting lighter works like buying and selling to women —a measure which, be believe, was introduced in Pitambar Charai Rongba's reign. In the context of the shortage of manpower we may also remember that Puranthaba foisted an unnecessary battle on the Khumans resulting in loss of lives. The plain fact is that for want of manpower, the people of

5. RC p. 70

Manipur lost the chance—the chance of a lifetime to consolidate Manipur's new position in Burma.

Manipur reached the political zenith in Garib Niwaz's reign. In the domain of culture, a great impetus was given to the trend begun in 1470. Formulation of the world-famous Manipuri Ras was round the corner. Fine horsemanship exemplified in the wars with Burma was giving birth to skill in polo, the world's finest games of which were about to be played in Manipur.

The repeated invasions of Burma and the devastation of prosperous towns and villages on a wide scale embittered the Burmese people. As a natural consequence, the people of Manipur, apart from religious considerations, had to look to other parts of India for companionship. If it was so in Garib Niwaz's reign, the trend was strengthened a hundredfold in the succeeding reigns when the Burmese carried fire and sword to Manipur or, still later, resorted to pin-pricks. The unavoidable necessity of the Manipuris to associate with other Indian peoples paved the way for emotional integration with the rest of India. The Manipuris burnt their boats by burning the Burmese royal boat and drifting it down the Ningthee burning.

CHAPTER—XV

CHIT SAIN TO GOUR SHYAM

Chit Sain ascended the throne immediately after Garib Niwaz's abdication in Kalen 1748. Originated in intrigues, his accession is one of the most unfortunate events in the history of Manipur. The kingdom was now caught in the meshes of political intrigues.

Unpopular and weak

Chit Sain was unpopular and weak. Even after the abdication, people thronged round the former king. Chit Sain did not like it. So he sent his father farther and farther from the capital. The new king achieved nothing. The reign of Chit Sain is a *tabula rasa*. The hospitable pages of the Royal Chronicle are blank. So are the pages of *Ningthourol Lambuba*. His coronation was also never held.

Last days of Garib Niwaz

The ex-king shifted to Ram Nagar, a village some 4 miles from the capital. In Hiyangei 1749, Garib Niwaz accompanied by his faithful son Shyam Sain started for Burma to escort his niece who was to be married to the king of Burma.

Shyam Sain stayed in Burma ; but Garib Niwaz came back upto Myedu. According to the Royal Chronicle, Burmese authorities requested him to fight with the Kois, which he

agreed. The Kois were defeated and Garib Niwaz returned to the capital with many Koi prisoners of war.

On Friday 29 Hiyangei (November) 1750, Garib Niwaz went to Thanga, a hilly island in the lake Logtag, to see the palms of *Areca catechu* (Manipuri *gwa pambi*) he planted in his palmy days in August 1743 as an experiment. Immediately after this, Chit Sain banished him. The ex-king went to Burma.

In Hiyangei 1751 news reached the capital that Garib Niwaz was returning with his retinue from Burma to Manipur. The king sent a team of four persons, who allowed Garib Niwaz and his retinue to return.

Garib Niwaz accompanied by Shyam Sain and the retinue stayed on the bank of the Ningthee. On Wednesday the 26th day of Poinu 1751 Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz was assassinated along with his retinue. In tradition, Shyam Sain after serving his father upto the last, jumped into the Ningthee.

The Royal Chronicle adds that immediately after the assassination there was an earthquake.

Dark deed come to light

Chit Sain's secret acts which ultimately resulted in the assassination of the former king came to light in the beginning of 1752. Everybody was indignant. Matters came to a head in Sajibu (about April) 1752. Chit Sain's brother Bharat Sain ascended the throne.

BHARAT SAIN

Bharat Sain ascended the throne on Saturday the full moon of Sajibu 1752. The people to a man banished Chit Sain, his son Deva Sain and Chit Sain's brother who was the Senapati (Commander-in-chief) to Cachar.

Ananta Sain, a son of Garib Niwaz, left the capital on Wednesday 5 Kalen 1752 for Tomphang Hiden, the river port on the Ningthee, where the old king breathed his last.

Garib Niwaz's *shraddha* was performed there with *nam sankirtan* (broadly, devotional music). He returned to the capital in 17 days.

Bharat Sain too achieved nothing. There was dissatisfaction against him also.

End of Chit Sain

After leaving Manipur, Chit Sain lived for some time in Cachar[1]. From there he requested the East India Company through the Prince of Tripura, to help him regain the throne[2]. It must be said to the credit of the English that as soon as they came to know why he was dethroned they threw out his case[3]. So he went to Jaintia, where he died[4] leaving no descendant.

Bharat Sain never moved outside the capital. *Ningthourol Lambuba* records nothing about him. His coronation also was never held for lack of stability. The Royal Chronicle records nothing in his reign except the expulsion of Chit Sain and his associates and the performance of Garib Niwaz's *shraddha* on the bank of the Ningthee.

GOUR SHYAM

Gour Shyam, the eldest of the three sons of Shyam Sain, ascended the throne on Monday 20 Hiyangei (about November) 1753. We believe there was a revolt. Bharat Sain fled to Burma. Two of his associates were killed. The unstable equilibrium which began with the abdication of Garib Niwaz in 1748 was now coming to an end. Bharat Sain's younger brother revolted ; but he was caught and killed in 1755.

Shifting of the Mayangs

There was a very small group of people called the Mayangs, distinct and separate from the Manipuri—speaking people, who served the king or the queen. Those who served the king were

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1 to 4 Abdul Ali : Notes on Early History of Manipur.

called *ningthou nai* (servants of the king) and those who served the queen, *leima nai* (servants of the queen). They came from beyond the western hills separating the Manipur Valley from Cachar. Gour Shyam shifted the small settlement of the *leima nai* Mayangs to Wangjing in 1756

Things had settled into shape after years of turmoil.

Consolidation of Manipur

Shyam Sain had three sons—Gour Shyam, Bhagya Chandra and Krishna Chandra. Gour Shyam ascended the throne ; Bhagya Chandra became the Yuvaraja (Crown Prince). After years of neglect, the kingdom needed some consolidation. Yuvaraja Bhagya Chandra proceeded on an expedition to Manshei. We meet him, for the first time, as a public figure. He acquitted himself like a hero and returned with many prisoners of war after the successful expedition

Appointment of the prince of Moirang

It may be recalled that Moirang became dependent long ago. The king appointed in 1757 Khelemba of Wayenbam family prince of Moirang This was Gour Shyam's second act of consolidation He was the king's relative on the distaff side but his appointment turned out to be a blunder

Relations with Cachar and Assam

Relations with Cachar and Assam continued to be good. In the fairly long history of Manipur extending over a period of nearly 2,400 years, there was never a war between Assam and Manipur. In 1757, the queen of Cachar visited Manipur with her son the king. She was received by Ananta Sain who was then the Senapati (Commander-in-chief).

Situation in Burma

Immediately after the death of Garib Niwaz, the Mons put an end to the Tongoo dynasty and it looked as though Burma would pass into their hands. But the Burmese far out-numbered the Mons. The Tongoo dynasty was gone ; but the great

adversity of the Burmese people found a great leader named Alaung-paya—one of the greatest leaders Burma has ever seen. He organised the Burmese, proclaimed himself king, defeated the Mons and consolidated the whole of Burma The Shan kingdom of Pong was annexed to Burma in 1752 during the short period of cataclysm following the Manipuri new year of 1748.

It was the united Burma under an able leader—and not the divided Burma of the time of Garib Niwaz—that Gour Shyam and Bhagya Chandra were called upon to meet.

Situation in Bengal

The English became masters of Bengal after the momentous Battle of Plassey in 1757. The Bengal of those days comprised modern West Bengal, modern Bangla Desh, Bihar and Orissa Before the English were at the helm of state, the Manipuris used to get some raw materials for their rocket from what was then Mughal Empire This was not possible after the cataclysm

Wars with Burma

According to Burmese history, Alaung-paya sent an expedition in 1755-56 under a distant relative to invade and devastate Manipur. The Burmese had now ample supplies of fire-arms. A pitched battle was fought at Tamu The Manipuris retreated up to Kakching A detachment of Manipuri troops under Bhagya Chandra repulsed the Burmese Some firearms were captured by the Manipuris.

In July 1757 news again reached Alaung-paya that the Manipuris were active on the western bank of the Ningthee. This river still formed the boundary between the domain of Manipur and that of Burma. At this time Alaung-paya was at Rangoon In 1758-59, according to Burmese history, Alaung-paya personally led an expedition against Manipur He proceeded up the Ningthee in a fleet and devastated the whole tract of land to the west of the Ningthee. According to the Royal Chronicle, a force under Yuvaraja Bhagya Chandra proceeded in the direction of Samjok and another

force under Senapati Ananta Sain proceeded in the direction of Tamu to repel the Burmese. This was in Hiyangei (about November) 1758. The Manipuri forces retreated upto Kakching. On Friday 28 Hiyangei, Gour Shyam went personally to engage the Burmese. After three days of fighting, the Manipuri force was in disarray on 3 Poinu. The Manipuris regrouped under Bhagya Chandra and fought the Burmese on Tuesday 11 Poinu (about December) 1758 at Leisang Khong. The Manipuris lost the battle. The Burmese advanced upto the capital. The Manipuris regrouped themselves at Sangaithen. The Burmese remained in the capital for 9 days and retreated.

Retreat was the only course open to the Burmese. They were inside the Valley and their supply-line lay through the south-eastern Manipur which could be cut any moment. According to Burmese history, when Alaung-paya retreated from Manipur, he carried away with him thousands of Manipuris men and women of all castes and settled them in the districts of Sagaing and Amarapura. This is very unlikely. The strategy of the Manipuris was to evacuate women and children while the battle was going on to distant villages where the Burmese had neither the courage nor the resources to go. In this case the Manipuris got about 10 days' time to evacuate. The Royal Chronicle does not mention any deportation of people at this stage.

After the Burmese left, the Manipuris came from Sangaithen and re-established the government at the capital.

Causes of Burmese victory

We saw in a previous analysis that the forte of the Burmese was their numerical strangth. This was all the more so now after the fall of the Tongoo dynasty. In addition, they had more firearms now as a result of the fierce rivalry between the English and the French which was going on at that time all over the globe. The English had built a factory

at Negrais. The French were determined to check their rise. So they armed the Burmese. Had the Burmese, the Shans and the Manipuris been left to themselves without the Europeans coming on the scene, the Manipuris would continue their programme of invading Burma every cold season. After the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, India and Burma were open to the Europeans, notably the Portuguese, the French and the English. Burma, being a maritime country got supplies of arms from the Portuguese and the French. Manipur being far inland, did not get them. The coming of of the Europeans therefore turned the tables.

There was a reversal of role. It was possible now for the Burmese to take the offensive and invade Manipur. The Manipuris were mostly on the defensive now. It is no small credit to Gour Shyam and Bhagya Chandra (also named Jai Singh) who resisted the Burmese with traditional weapons and some muskets.

JAI SINGH

About 3 months after the retreat of the Burmese, Gour Shyam abdicated in favour of Jai Singh, who ascended the throne on Thursday 7 Sajibhu (about April) 1759. This was good for Manipur. Gour Shyam while retreating from an engagement with the Burmese fell from his horse and broke his leg[1]. He therefore found it difficult to discharge the onerous duties of kingship of those days which included fighting with the enemy.

Consolidation of Samjok

During the years of turmoil, the chief of Samjok showed some wavering of loyalty. The king therefore sent an expedition to Samjok. The Manipuris encamped at Samjok. The king sent a reinforcement under Saikhom Manohar and Akham Madhab Ram. Suzerainty of Manipur was confirmed. The Manipuris however did not bring any prisoner of war.

1. Abdul Ali and McCullogh.

The same year, the king went on an expedition to Muwao, a Shan principality. The Burmese had built there a monument of brick to what they called Burmese victory over the Manipuris. King Jai Singh razed it

Drought

In 1760 there was drought. Spring rain failed in April. The monsoon also was insufficient It is not yet known whether the rainfall was insufficient in other parts of eastern India also in this year In Manipur it resulted in scarcity condition but not amounting to famine

Introduction of an era

On Thursday 12 Hiyangei (about November) 1760, king Jai Singh in consultation with Bhagavati Thakur and Mani Ram Singh Siddhanta of Khumbong-mayum family introduced a new era called Chandrabda The new era began as 971. Along with the new era, a new almanac prepared from the standpoint of Manipur was also introduced

The preparation of the almanac took 5 months. On its release, the collaborators and their helpers were rewarded suitably The king also gave *dakshina* (largesse) to Brahmins and scattered coins (Manipuri *tanka*) at the marketplace. The title of Chandra Siddhanta was conferred on Mani Ram and he was appointed the head of the Royal College of Astrologers

The importance of this measure of Jai Singh cannot be over-estimated. Since the latitude and the longitude of the capital of Manipur are different from those of centres of learning like Nabadwip and Benares, an almanac from the standpoint of Imphal was a long-felt want. This also improved the keeping of the Royal Chronicle. The Royal Chronicle. attained a great degree of excellence in the reign of the great king Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz. But in the reigns of his two sons, the standard fell abruptly. It registered a slight rise in the reign of Gour Shyam.

It still took some more time for the Royal Chronicle to attain the degree of excellence of Garib Niwaz's reign. But the intellectual capability to record and forecast astronomical phenomena accurately was there.

Relations with Tripura

In the reign of Garib Niwaz, there were wars with Tripura. But in the context of the changed Manipur-Burma relations, Jai Singh changed the Tripura policy of Manipur. This was a move in the right direction. The relations with Tripura improved.

In 1761, Tripura sent an elephant as a present. Ananta Sain went upto Moirang to receive it.

Preparation against Burmese invasion

Burmese invaders used to come to Manipur by two different routes. One was through Tamu and the other, through Heirok. So two defence outposts were opened. Akham Madhab Ram and an officer of Usham family were posted at Kakching and Haobam Khela Ram was posted at Heirok.

Manipur in search of firearms

For Manipur, the need of the hour was firearms. Without them, it was difficult to defend the frontiers ; but with them it was a simple job to defeat the Burmese. The Manipuris made attempts to make guns in the reign of Khagemba but could not produce a complete gun. They could make the barrel only. Jai Singh fully grasped the situation and was in search of firearms for peace and prosperity of Manipur.

World situation

This was the time of rivalry between the English and the French all over the world. The English had set up a factory at Negrais in Lower Burma. At the instigation of the French, Alaung-paya destroyed it. The English were therefore angry with him and were looking for means to get compensation

for the wrong. They were slowly and steadily making headway in India. They had established a factory at Chittagong and won the Battle of Plassey.

For Manipur, it seemed, the best way to get firearms was to get them from the English and the easiest way to contact them was to send an agent to Chittagong.

Negotiation with the English

Jai Singh sent Haridas Gossain as his agent to contact the English at Chittagong and conclude a treaty with them on his behalf for supply of troops with firearms to fight with the Burmese. Haridas Gossain contacted Mr Henry Verelst, Chief of Chittagong Factory, at Chittagong and after some preliminary talks, proposed articles for a treaty of alliance between the English and Manipur.

Manipur was one of the first Indian powers to contact the English for alliance. Proposals from Manipur came at a time when the English were smarting under the injuries done by the Burmese but getting no means to fight with them.

Terms agreed upon

The following is the summary of the terms agreed upon between Haridas Gossain, acting for and on behalf of Jai Singh, and Mr Henry Verelst :

1. Jai Singh shall be assisted with such of the English troops as from time to time can be spared for the recovery of the lands and effects from the Burmans.

2. For this assistance, Jai Singh is willing and ready to pay, at the immediate end of every month, all the troops in his service so long as they remain in his service.

3. Jai Singh is willing and ready to join the English troops with all his force to obtain full and ample satisfaction for all and every injury the English have from time to time suffered at the hands of the Burmans at Negrais, or any other place, during the administration of the Burmans while in possession of Pegu.

4. Jai Singh will consider, from the time of signing the the treaty, the injuries which have been done to the English by the Burmans as injuries done to himself. He will also ever hereafter be ready to resent any new insult or hindrance the English trade or people may meet at Pegu, Negrais or any other place at present under the Rajah of Burma or Rajah of Pegu—also every other power or Government that may interrupt the free trade of every English subject passing into and through their countries.

5. Jai Singh will, at all times, fully consider every enemy of the English as his own enemy, and the English shall consider every enemy of Jai Singh as their enemy.

6. Jai Singh shall grant such lands as the English may think proper for the building of a factory and a Fort for the transaction of their business and protection oftheir persons and properties; and whatever place the English may choose for their Factory and Fort, Jai Singh shall also grant to the English, free of rent forever, a distance of country of eight thousand cubits round such Factory and Fort.

7. Jai Singh shall grant to the English permission for an open trade into and through his country, free of all duties, hindrance or molestation; and he will ever protect the English in the same.

6. Jai Singh shall not enter into any accomodation with the Burmah Rajah without the advice and approbation of the English; nor shall the English enter into a separate and distinct treaty without previously advising Jai Singh.

9. If English and Manipuri troops are obliged to march against the Burmah Rajah to obtain satisfaction for their mutual injuries and in consequence, make themselves masters of the Burmah country, Jai Singh agrees to make good to the English all such losses as they have ever heretofore sustained.

Alliance provisionally concluded

The alliance was provisionally concluded on 14 September 1762 and Mr Verelst sent on the 19th September a copy of the proposed alliance to Mr Henry Vansittart, Governor of Bengal with a request to approve all the conditions Along with it, he requested the Governor to send a force for going to Manipur to help Jai Singh. Mr Verelst emphasised the importance of the expedition in these words "Immediately on their arrival in Manipur, they would be able to demand satisfaction from the Burmans for all injuries the nation (the British) have received from them at Negrais and Pegu". We may remark that Mr Verelst gave too rosy a picture

Alliance approved by the Board

The Governor placed the letter of Mr Verelst and the papers relating to the alliance before the Board in its meeting on the 4th October. The Board wished to have the advice of Colonel Coote and Major Carmac. No decision was taken on that day In the adjourned meeting held on the 11th, the matter was taken up but some urgent letters from Shah Alum, king of Delhi, praying for immediate English help were also on the agenda The Board decided that it would be 'very imprudent' to detach any part of the European troops to 'so distant a quarter' as Manipur at that critical time ; but at the same time the Board also decided that they would not lose 'so favourable an opportunity' for concluding an alliance with the Rajah of Manipur, as it would open the road for demanding reparations from the Burmese for the repeated ill-treatment at Negrais. The treaty of alliance was approved by the Board. But the sending of troops in assistance of Jai Singh was deferred.

The English sent troops

In terms of the Treaty of 1762, a detachment of English troops with Mr Verelst at the head left Chittagong for Manipur in January 1763 and reached Khaspur the then capital of

Cachar in April. But owing to rain and pestilence, the troops could not advance further and had to retreat to Jai Nagar. Then owing to the war with Mir Kasim the Nawab of Bengal, the English recalled the troops and Mr Verelst. They therefore went back to Chittagong.

Abdication

In the early part of 1762, a *brahmachari* (a celebate) was murdered by his servant. The king had an extraordinary religious bent. He took the full responsibility ofnot being able to protect the life of the *brahmachari*. Before the Manipuri year was over, he abdicated.

GOUR SHYAM AGAIN

After the abdication of Jai Singh, Gour Shyam again ascended the throne. The precise date is not given in the Royal Chronicle. Jai Singh again became the Yuvaraja.

In 1763, by about February, Yuvaraja Jai Singh accompanied by Haridas Gossain went on an expedition to Sokpao. It was subdued. The Yuvaraja and Haridas Gossain returned to the capital with many prisoners of war.

Miscellaneous events

In 1763 a hurricane swept the Manipur Valley. Trees were uprooted and houses tumbled down ; but no loss of life is mentioned in the Royal Chronicle.

In 1763, a large number of boats for boat-race were built.

Confirmation of the Treaty

After concluding the Treaty, Haridas Gossain returned to Manipur with some men referred to as the Telangas in the Royal Chronicle. Whether the Telangas were the Talaings of Burma are not yet settled. Not long after the arrival of Haridas Gossain, Jai Singh abdicated.

In October 1763, Gour Shyam sent two accredited agents—Ananta Sain (who was then Khwai Rakpa) and Jaganath Das—to Mr Verelst at Chittagong to confirm all the terms of

the Treaty on his behalf. According to English records, the Manipuri king sent three accredited agents. All the terms of the Treaty were confirmed on behalf of King Gour Shyam.

It was also mentioned that since the Burmese had devastated a large part of Manipur, it was not possible to pay for all the expenses of the troops who came upto Khaspur. We may mention that the sending of troops upto Khaspur only was fruitless from the Manipuri point of view. But as a token of sincerity, the king sent 500 Manipuri gold coins to be valued at 12 British Indian Rupees each. British Indian Rupees were silver coins.

The Manipuri gold coins were called *sana tangka* (*sana* gold; *tangka* stamped coin) By a large part of Manipur, the Manipuris meant their territory in Burma. Ananta Sain and his party returned to the capital in 9 months. English troops took about 4 months to reach Khaspur in Cachar from Chittagong.

"Conquests are not our aim"

The Governor of Bengal sent a copy of the Treaty to the Court of Directors in London for approval. The Court of Directors took a detached and realistic view. They gave a clear instruction to the officers of the East India Company in India *not* to proceed with the Treaty. In a clear policy statement, the Court of Directors observed "Conquests are not our aim and if we can secure and preserve our present positions in Bengal, we shall rest well-satisfied".

In their letter dated 30 October, the Court of Directors further observed"... ..although the advantages offered by the Rajah may be specious and you might have an opportunity of getting redress for the repeated ill-treatment of our settlement at the Negrais, yet the distance of the object, the general weakness of our forces and the uncertainty of success surely are sufficient reasons for not proceeding upon new hostilities".

These are words of wisdom. The major policy statement "Conquests are not our aim" is relevant to the history of

the whole of India. The grounds given by the Court of Directors for not taking up new hostilities are good grounds. The advantages promised by the Rajah of Manipur were beautiful (specious in old use means beautiful) ; but the need of the East India Company at that time was consolidation in Bengal which included Bihar and Orissa also.

Regarding sending troops to Manipur, the Court of Directors observed "We do not disapprove however of your ordering the detachment of six companies of seapoys to take post at Moneypoor under the direction of the Chief and Council of Chittagong, provided it may have been the means of cultivating a friendship with the said Rajah and giving you an opportunity of being acquainted with the strength, nature and dispositions of the Burmahs that such future use may be made of these circumstances as be really and essentially for the Company's interest and on no other account whatsoever...."

Regarding opening up new channels of commerce, the Court of Directors observed,... "but we shall still be always well pleased with and applaud your endeavours for opening any new channels of commerce."

Owing to the strict instructions of the Court of Directors, the East India Company did not proceed with the Treaty further. The Manipuris also found that to try to get arms help from the English was expensive without being productive. So they too abandoned the Treaty. As both parties abandoned the Treaty, it became a dead letter. The English lost the original copy of the Treaty also.

The original copy of the Treaty is not extant now. Abandonment of the Treaty benefited both parties.

End of Gour Shyam's reign

Gour Shyam died on Tuesday 29 Thawan (about August) 1763 after an eventful reign. He left only a daughter—Kuranga Nayani. We shall hear of her in the next chapter.

Reigns of Gour Shyam and Jai Singh : Assessment

Immediately after the abdication of Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz, a rot set in the governance of Manipur After the expulsion of the kings—Chit Sain and Bharat Sain—Gour Shyam and Jai Singh stemmed the rot They were ably assisted by their uncle Ananta Sain

The years immediately following Garib Niwaz's abdication were crucial for Manipur and Burma For Manipur's neighbour Bengal (including Bihar and Orissa) also, they were so The Battle of Plassey with all its implication was round the corner. It was during this short span that Burma was stealing marches over Manipur

The Burmese had raised a monument at Muwao to what they called their victory over the Manipuris Jai Singh had the prowess to march there and raze the monument. Both the brothers tried their best to find firearms for Manipur. They knew what was going on in other parts of Eastern India particularly Bengal and Assam. The Manipuris of those days were familiar with south-eastern Bengal—the region of Dacca and Chittagong There were Manipuris with enough command in Assamese, Bengali, Shan, Burmese and Tripuri for diplomatic transaction Only two or so Indian powers concluded treaties with the East India Company earlier than Manipur.

Their policy on religion was a definite improvement on Garib Niwaz's We no longer hear of banishment, transportation or fine for religious views.

But the reigns also show that small kingdoms (small from the standpoint of area and population) were fast becoming an anachronism. The events of the reigns of the two monarchs show that the days of Khagemba or even Garib Niwaz were long since past. Burma became a united country in the few fateful years immediately following the assassination of Garib Niwaz. Burma is about 26 times the size of Manipur with a correspondingly large population. Wars between Manipur and Burma are to be viewed against this background.

The reigns saw the gradual diminution in the importance of the famous Manipuri cavalry which had stood the kingdom in good stead in countless battles. This was because of the revolution brought about by gunpowder in the technique of warfare all over the world.

Manipur continued to be in the medieval age, although it was the late medieval age. The beliefs and outlook of the Manipuri people were still medieval.

One important drawback of the reigns, as in other parts of India, was the continued neglect of physical and life sciences. Western Europe, particularly France, Italy, England and Germany, had made much progress. It is one of History's ironies that India which was in the forefront in science in ancient times should contribute little in the period under review. It is some of the ironies of History that in 1644, when Evangelista Torricelli, made the barometer, the Manipuris should still be killing tigers at Chinga hill in Imphal to make life safer and more comfortable ; that in 1657, when Isaac Newton discovered the laws of gravitation, the Manipuris should still be warring against the Shans of Upper Burma to make their position safer and that in 1762, when Count Alessandro Volta was about to usher in the battery to generate electricity, the Manipuris should find their defence efforts handicapped for want of a mechanical mixture called gunpowder.

CHAPTER— XVI

JAI SINGH AGAIN

After Gour Shyam. Jai Singh ascended the throne for the second time in 1763. Jai Singh had three other names—Bhagya Chandra, Karta and Chingthang Khomba. Historians mostly call him Jai Singh. In Vaishnavite circles he is better known as Bhagya Chandra. In hill areas of Manipur and among older women in the countryside, he is better known as Chingthang Khomba.

Burmese invasion of 1764

In the year Jai Singh ascended the throne of Manipur for the second time, Hsinbyushin ascended the throne of Burma. Alaung-paya who had to retreat from Imphal in 1758-59, went to invade Siam (Thailand). Being unsuccessful there also, he returned towards his kingdom and died on the way in 1760. His son Hsinbyushin (1763-76) inherited from him the ambition to conquer Manipur and Thailand. So he personally invaded Manipur in the last part of 1764 at the head of a well-equipped large army.

Jai Singh's uncle Hari Charan, who was then the Senapati, engaged the Burmese at the marketplace of Tamu. The Manipuris lost two able warriors—Naharup Hajari and Khetri Chaitanya—and retreated. The Manipuris under the personal leadership of Jai Singh halted the advance of the Burmese at Kakching for some time. The Manipuris made a breastwork

Hsinbyushin who could not grasp the realities believed that Burma would easily defeat China. He therefore did not like the treaty. The Burmese general and his men were afraid to return home[4]. So they invaded Manipur but without authority of the Burmese king[5].

The Burmese army was big as it was returning from a war with China The Manipuris fought gallantly[6]. But they were defeated by strength of numbers. Jai Singh fled to Cachar for the second time to organise defence from there. He returned in 20 days. The Burmese had retreated long before. During the 20 days when the king was absent, Keibi Ram carried on the administration from outside Imphal.

Normality returned with the return of the king. Before the year 1770 was over, the Burmese returned again. But the Manipuris engaged them and killed 700 Burmese troops.

Further wars with Burma

Hsinbyushin continued to attack Manipur and Thailand but these later invasions were not so successful[7] At the beginning of 1773, the Burmese again invaded Manipur Jai Singh fled the capital for the third time but repelled the Burmese in a few months*. The Burmese ambition to conquer Manipur proved to be a mirage. In the midst of Burmese invasions, Manipur made 5 cannon*. Hsinbyushin died in 1776[8]. He was succeeded by his son Singu Min (1776-82)[9] He too was mainly occupied with his fruitless attempts to conquer Manipur. At the last moments of his life, he saw that Manipur remained as unconquerable as at the beginning

Religious reforms

It was in the midst of these repeated Burmese invasions that Bhagya Chandra carried out his religious reforms for which he is justly famous. Pitambar Charai Rongba was a worshipper of Krishna. So was Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz

4 to 9. See W.S. Desai : *From the Royal Chronicle A Pageant History of Burma.pp. 97-98

in his early years. So was Gour Shyam throughout his life. He worshipped an image of Radha Raman (Beloved of Radha) i.e. Krishna. When he died, his queen took it to Nabadwip (West Bengal), where it was installed and worshipped. All these go to prove that Gour Shyam followed Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism Garib Niwaz along with his sons switched over to the worship of Rama. Among the Manipuris there were some followers of Nimbarka's school of Vaishnavism.

Bhagya Chandra used force of persuation and carried the people with him. He with the whole Hindu population became adherents of Chaitanya's school. It became the state religion.

The second theophany

Lord Krishna revealed Himself to Bhagya Chandra in his dream for the second time. He told him in his dream to found an image of His.

The capital of Manipur was at this time at Bishnupur. Bhagya Chandra consulted his ministers. On Wednesday the first of Lamda (about March), 1776 the king and his retinue started for a small hill called Kaina (about 7 miles to the south-east of Imphal) to search for the jack tree revealed in his dream for making an image of Govindajee.

On Friday 12 Hiyangei (about November) 1776 making the image of Govindajee was begun. The sculptor was Pandit Gopi Ram Singh of Wangkhei. After the installation of the image, the king awarded him a pair of gold bangles*, 175 acres of revenue-free rice-field, a couple of slaves, a horse and a buffalo.

Kanchipur new capital

By the beginning of 1779, the king left for Kanchipur to select a site for his new capital. On Wednesday 13 Sajibhu

*In the 18th and the 19th centuries, men wore gold bangles if awarded by the king. It was a privilege.

(about April) 1779 the Yuvarajah (Crown Prince) began the construction of the king's residence at Kanchipur. On Tuesday 3 Kalen (about May), 1779 the king shifted the capital to Kanchipur, the campus of modern Manipur University.

The birth of Manipuri Ras

The saintly king Bhagya Chandra had the gift of imagination. He constantly listened also, with faith, to the vivid descriptions of Krishna's sports at Vrindaban given in Book X of the *Bhagavata*. Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism is known for its emphasis on *bhakti* (devotion). Bhagya Chandra longed to see Him. All these produced their effect. One night, he saw Krishna—beautiful as a saphire girt with gold—playing *ras lila* surrounded by milkmaids Vrindaban.

The dream gave Bhagya Chandra a tremendous inspiration. He formulated a dance-drama on the basis of chapters 29 to 33 of Book X of the *Bhagavata* and named it Maha Ras The dialogues are in Sanskrit—they are *slokas* from the chapters mentioned above. Every bit of Maha Ras is based on one sloka or other of these five chapters. Bhagya Chandra's pious daughter Vimbavati, comparable with Meera of Rajasthan, helped her father in translating, as far as practicable, his dream into reality.

According to the Bhagavata, the *rasa lila* was on the full moon night of autumn. It is capable of two interpretations. It may mean the full moon of Mera (the full moon of Ashwin) or Hiyangei (the fullmoon of Kartik). Bhagya Chandra accepted the latter view.

On Friday, 11 Hiyangei (about November) 1779 the *abhishek* of Govindajee was held at Kanchipur. Maha Ras was dedicated to Govindajee on that day and was performed for 5 consecutive nights from the night of 11 Hiyangei to the night of the 15th Hiyangei (full moon), both nights inclusive.

To respect, as far as practicable, the view of those who interpret 'the full moon of autumn' as the full moon

of Mera, Bhagya Chandra formulated another dance-drama and named it Kunja Ras. It was performed on the night of the full moon of Mera. It is however a much shorter dance.

The dream-like costume of Manipuri Ras—with its glitttering tinsel and tiny pieces of bright mirror against a background of deep green or deep red in the case of *gopis* and bright orange, peacock's feather and tinsel in the case of Krishna—captures, to some extent, the dream-scene of Bhagya Chandra.

Immigration of Brahmins

The immigration of Brahmins and their permanent settlement in Manipur which was a regular feature was interrupted for some time on account of the unsettled condition after the abdication of Garib Niwaz. It was resumed in the reign of Jai Singh inspite of three Burmese invasions.

The ancestors of the following Manipuri Brahmin families migrated to Manipur in this reign · (1) Adhikari-mayum Anoubam (from Shantipur, West Bengal) (2) Dhyandas-mayum (from Lahore, West Punjab now in Pakistan) (3) Vrajabasi-mayum (from Vrindaban, Uttar Pradesh) and (4) Wari-libam (from Assam)

Events in Assam

After Kuranga Nayani was married to King Rajeshwar Singh, she became the principal queen.[1] Rajeshwar Singh died in 1769. After his death, the Moamarias, a religious sect professing Vaishnavism, revolted against Lakshmi Singh, brother and successor of Rajeshwar Singh. The rebels successfully occupied the capital city Rangpur and ousted the Ahom government for a few months. During this period, Ragha Moran, one of the principal leaders of the rebellion, misbehaved towards her. In secret collaboration with the supporters of Lakshmi Singh, she stabbed Ragha Moran with a sword just below the calf during the Assamese festival of Bihu. The royalists disguised as Bihu singers were already present before her and put him to death, thus completing the work

valiantly begun by her. The numerous virgins collected by Ragha Moran at the palace came out sword in hand and participated in the massacre of his family. Lakshmi Singh regained the throne. The services of Kuranga Nayani were publicly acknowledged in her presence. She was given the privileges and dignity of a principal queen[2].

Requests from Assam

Lakshmi Singh died in 1780 after a troubled reign. The Moamaria revolt briefly noticed above began to go out of control in the reign of Gaurinath Singh son and successor of Lakshmi Singh. The Moamaria revolt of 21 April 1783[3] was suppressed with some difficulty, but their fresh revolt of 1786 under a new leader[4] was far more difficult to tackle. Gaurinath fled from Rangpur towards Guwahati on 19 January 1788 at midnight[5]. He remained there for 6 years.

Gaurinath sent messengers to the kings of Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur for help[6] The kings of Jainta and Cachar sent evasive replies[7].

Response of Manipur

The envoys from Assam numbering 64 arrived on Friday 2 Lamda (about March) 1789. The king decided to send a small force. On 13 Lamda a team of engineers was sent to improve the road to Assam. On Saturday 7 Kalen (about May), 1789 a force of 700 troops was sent to help the king of Assam. Thakur Rama of Guru-mayum family was appointed the leader. This was the time of an imminent Burmese invasion. The king himself started with a force 8 days earlier to repel the Burmese.

The force under Rama returned to Manipur after 6 months with 60 Assamese, 29 horses and 5 books (*skandhas*) of the *Bhagavat*. Out of the 700 troops, 70 died during the expedition.

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1. *Ahom Buranji* p. 290, 2 to 7. S.K. Bhuyan : *Anglo-Assamese Relations*.

According to *Tungkhungia Buranji*, the Manipuri force on reaching Assam was directed by the Ahom king to proceed to Dichoi[1]. It is recorded in it that the Manipuri force instead of proceeding to that place, returned to Manipur after plundering Assamese villages on the Assam-Cachar frontier. The charge is not corroborated by the Royal Chronicle of Manipur. According to the latter, the Manipuris while in Assam had to eat meat to sustain life and accordingly they were made to undergo expiation on reaching Manipur.

Further request from Assam

Two and a half years more passed and the situation in Assam further deteriorated. Troubles began in Kamrup and Darrang also. Guwahati being no longer safe, Gaurinath shifted to Nowgong. In July 1790, he sent a fresh request to Jai Singh for help[2].

Jai Singh and Madhu Chandra in Assam

The request from Assam reached Manipur in August—on Friday 11 Thawan 1790.* It was considered by the king four days later.* Military assistance was not possible in the rainy season.

Immediately after the rainy season, the road to Assam was improved in October. Prince Madhu Chandra started in November with a force as an advance party. Eight days later, the king himself started to assist the Ahom king. How many troops accompanied the king is not mentioned in the Royal Chronicle. But according to Ahom sources, 500 horse and 4,000 foot accompanied the king.

Jai Singh accompanied by Madhu Chandra reached Khutarmur, where Gaurinath was staying. Gaurinath requested them to proceed to Jorhat where the Ahom prime minister was holding out against the rebels. They went to Jorhat and established contact with the prime minister, who received them politely. The courteous conversation among them is recorded in *Tungkhungia Buranji*.

1. *Tungkhungia Buranji* p. 121. 2 AARp. 233. *RC

As requested, Jai Singh accompanied by Madhu Chandra proceeded towards Rangpur, which had become the headquarters of the rebellion, to attack it immediately. The Manipuri army was strengthened with a detachment of the prime minister's force The Manipuris attacked the Moamarias and halted at Gaurisagar near Rangpur. Madhu Chandra went in advance with a detachment and outflanking the Moamaria army forced his way into the Rangpur fortress, the very nerve-centre of the Moamaria war-effort It was a mixed exploit of valour and skill Inside the fortress, Madhu Chandra massacred Moamarias of every age and sex.

Soon afterwards, Madhu Chandra received the news that the Moamarias had fiercely fired upon the army of his father killing a large number of Manipuris He returned His detachment was fired upon , but he and his men joined the main Manipuri army Jai Singh riding his horse Hayaraj personally conducted the operation , but had ultimately to retreat before the well-directed determined cannon fire of the Moamarias

This was the time when Burmese invasion of Manipur was hanging like the sword of Damocles On receiving information that the Burmese were active on the fronier, Jai Singh returned to Manipur leaving a small force of 700 troops to help maintain law and order

Manipuri help ineffective : Reasons

The disturbances in Assam were political only outwardly They were religious in nature at the bottom When the Manipuris reached Assam, the Moamaria rebellion was no longer a rebellion—it had become a regular civil war affecting almost the entire Ahom kingdom The cause was very deep-seated. The civil war was mainly the outcome of the religious persecution of the followers of Vaishnavism extending over two centuries

King Gaurinath was, in our view, thoroughly incompetent to operate the machinery of Ahom government. He came

to the throne at a tender age without training in warfare or administration. It is said that he was addicted to opium. He spent his time in useless and queer amusements. Chaos is the natural result in such circumstances. Some effort on his part was absolutely essential for restoring normality

The Ahom government was suffering, so to speak, from a severe degenerative disease. If it were full of vitality, some external help would enable it to tide over a temporary difficulty. Unfortunately it was not so. Even if Jai Singh, by some miracle, could restore Gaurinath on the throne, he would not be on it for a long time. The Moamarias would again rise in rebellion, turn him out and occupy the city. Assam would again relapse into chaos and anarchy.

The Ahom power had become a spent force. It dragged on for some 25 years more before the Burmese overthrew it. It was beyond the power of a small kingdom like Manipur to render any effective help to the Ahom king in a a civil war of great dimension.

Calamities

A severe flood devastated the Valley in 1775. Many houses were swept away upto Logtag People took shelter on roofs of their houses. A large number of people died. Famine followed. The flood passed into folk-memory. Even now the Manipuris refer to it as *Wangkhei hagtakki ishing* (the flood of the time of the Wangkheis). They carried on the administration in the absence of the king in one of his flights.

The cause of the flood is not given in the Royal Chronicle. We believe. the inability of the Manipuris to attend to management of their small but trovblesome rivers on accounut of repeated Burmese invasions coupled with untimely heavy rain was the cause of the unprecedented flood.

A severe smallpox epidemic broke out in January 1786 and raged for two years. In the words of the Royal Chronicle.

'countless people died'. The Crown Prince Nabananda died of smallpox on Thursday 13 Wagching in 1786.

Palace Revolt of 1794

In 1794, at midnight of Shree Panchamee (better known as Vasanta Panchamee in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and some other states), Krishna Chandra, Jai Singh's brother revolted. His men set fire to the king's residence and stabbed the Senapati (Commander-in-Chief) who came to save the house. The rebels also surrounded the houses of the princes Labanya Chandra and Madhu Chandra to prevent them from coming out and coming to the rescue of their father. But the princes overcame the rebels, who now fled.

Rebellion being high treason, the law of the realm prescribed execution of the offenders without exception. But in this case the king exercised his prerogative of mercy and substituted transportation, for short terms, to nearby places within Manipur.

Shifting the capital to Imphal

In April 1796, the capital of Manipur was shifted from Kanchipur to Imphal. But the site of the old palace at Kangla was not occupied. Jai Singh built his residence, the temple of Govindajee and other buildings at what is now Raj Bhavan within a stone's throw from Kangla. He dug a few ponds in the new palace compound. At the centre of one of them, a little land was left at the centre and on it he planted a pipul tree (*ficus religiosa*).

Literature

A number poets and writers adorned the court of Jai Singh. Among them we may mention Govinda Ram Nungangba, Gopi Ram Wangkhei, Madhab Ram Wahengba, Vrindaban Mayengba and Lavanga Singh Konthoujamba. Madhab Ram Wahengba wrote among other books *Langlon*. Vrindaban Mayengba wrote *Ekadashi Panchali*. *Sona Manik*, a proto-novel,

is an adaptation. So is *Ram Nongaba* dealing with Ram swargarohan.

The most important adaptation in Jai Singh's reign is the adaptation of Virata Parva of the Mahabharata from the Bengali work of Ram Krishnadas. Yuvaraja Nabanada was a scholar He translated Ram Krishnadas's work into Manipuri. On the basis of this translation, Vrindaban Mayengba and Madhab Ram Wahengba composed *Virata Parva* in verse in Manipuri

Development works

Development works almost came to a standstill after Garib Niwaz's abdication It was resumed to some extent in the reign of Gour Shyam. But he died early Jai Singh resumed development works in his second reign He opened a big smithy for manufacture of cannon and muskets There, all the *panas* (a number of villages make one *pana*) working together produced 5 cannon on war footing during the Burmese invasions. Even after the invasions abated, the work of manufacturing some more cannon and muskets went on to enhance the defence capability The Royal Chronicle, refers to the making of a long musket of iron also Defence of the realm was the first priority on the development programme

The king's government developed the salt-wells at Chandra Khong, Ningen, Waikhong, Koubru, Heirok and Naharup. It was a long-felt want The kingdom was self-sufficient in salt. The government also dredged the entire course of the River Imphal from Koirengei and the Nambul, from Mongsangei downwards ; and repaired the river-bunds of the Irin They were most useful rivers and from the stand-point of flood control, the most troublesome ones

The government built two bridges over the Irin and inaugurated them in 1793. The government also constructed a market in Imphal and named it New Market It was

inaugurated on Monday 22 Langban (about September) 1791. The improvement of the road to Assam, though intended for the expeditions benefited trade and commerce and the people of the hills through whose localities the road lay.

The government also dug some new ponds and reclaimed some derelict ones. Among the derelict ponds reclaimed was Padma Sagar—meaning the Sea of Lotus Blooms—dug in the reign of Garib Niwaz. Ananta Sain, who was the minister, inaugurated a pond in 1783. It came to be known as Mantri Pukhri meaning Minister's Pond. The locality round the pond also came to be known as Mantri Pukhri. It is on modern Imphal-Dimapur Road. The pond with a peepul tree at the centre newly dug in this reign is now used by the Fire Brigade for refilling their mobile water-tanks. As these lines are written (1991), it is maintained very nicely.

Hill peoples.

Jai Singh's subjects in the hill areas used to come to the capital to pay their respects to him. The Royal Chronicle records their visits. Thus the people of Ukhrul paid their respects to the king in 1781 ; the chief of Hundung and the people of Choithar, in 1784. In 1785 the people of Ukhrul came again and paid their respects to the king. He gave them cloths, spades, daos, salt and fruits. In the same year, the inhabitants of Hundung found and brought the gun Khagemba lost during the Burmese invasions. They presented it to the king. Six days earlier, the gun Khunjaoba, which had been similarly lost during the Burmese invasions, was found from a river-bed by fishermen. In 1790 the inhabitants of Huining (the Luhupas), Ukhrul and Hundung came and paid their respects to the king.

In 1778 the king made his Kabui subjects play hockey. In 1781 the inhabitants of Ukhrul who came and paid their respects to the king witnessed hockey and boat-race. In 1782 the king organised a boat-race between the Luhupas and the hillmen of south-western Manipur. The latter won.

Reports of occasional conflicts among different hill peoples also reached the capital from time to time during the long reign of 34 years. The killing of 34 Taraos by a certain neighbouring hill people on Wednesday 4 Lamda (about March) 1791 is an instance in point. Later, the king led an expedition against the offending hillmen.

Muslim subjects

In a rare reference to the Muslim subjects of the king, the Royal Chronicle records that on Friday 23 Kalen (about May), a Muslim named Tomba of Mangan Mayum presented the king with different kinds of the produce of his garden and field. He was suitably rewarded.

The amounts and kinds of the produce of the garden and the field of the above mentioned Muslim farmer shows that he was well-to-do. While we do not doubt that there might be Muslims in indigent circumstances, the present shows the prosperous condition of the average Muslim subject of those days.

Incidentally, the present shows the varieties of garden and field crops of the second half of the 18th century. They included *Vigna mungo* (Manipuri *mug*; Hindi *mung*), *Pisum sativum* (Manipuri *mangal*; Hindi *matar*), *Dolichos uniflorus* (Manipuri *sagol-hawai*; Hindi *kulthi*), tobacco and sugar-cane.

Criminal law

Brahmins were not executed. Their maximum punishment was banishment from the realm. Thus in 1791 Kokpei, a Brahmin, who was found guilty of murdering a woman by stabbing was not executed. He was banished.

Husbands were vicariously liable, even in criminal cases, for acts of their wives. Thus in 1798 Kamalini, a married Brahmin woman, called out another married Brahmin woman from the latter's house and seriously assaulted her. Kamalini herself got off scot-free but her husband Rupananda was

transported, perhaps for a short term, to Moirang. The *ratio decidendi* was perhaps that it was the duty of Rupananda to keep his wife under control ; failing in it, he should be liable.

The law of Manipur prescribed capital punishment for murder. But in this reign we find no capital punishment for murder. It was invariably commuted to transportation. Thus in 1793 a domestic servant murdered his master's wife by spearing. He was transported. Again in 1794, a slave murdered his wife. He was transported to Shugnu. In earlier reigns,they would be executed.

But capital punishment was not abolished. It was reserved for subversion in conspiracy with a foreign power. Thus in 1768 certain persons who attempted to overthrow the government by conspiring with a certain neighbouring foreign power were executed.

Duelling had already become unlawful. In 1779, two junior officers entered into an agreement to duel. The king forbade them. For Hindus, punishment for drinking was shooting with arrows at the market-place. Occasions were, however, very rare for this law to apply.

Relations with the rest of India

Pilgrimages to the Ganga which became a regular feature were suspended during the three Burmese invasions. They were resumed now. Batches of about 40 people went in the cold season to the Ganga on pilgrimage. There are frequent references in the Royal Chronicle to such pilgrimages if the pilgrims were distinguished personages. But for every pilgrimage recorded in the Royal Chronicle, there must have been many which did not figure in it. Likewise pilgrims from other parts of India came more frequently and in bigger batches now.

Visits of Vaishnava preachers from Bengal became a regular feature in this and subsequent reigns.

Bhagya Chandra's pilgrimage

On 5 February 1798 (20 Phairen 1719 Shakabda), the king with a large retinue started for pilgrimage to Vrindaban. He was accompanied by his queens, 4 sons, 3 daughters and a large number of nobles and attendants. His porters numbered 300 and the pilgrims, about 400. He took arms and ammunition and royal insignia with him. In his absence Yuvaraja Labanya Chandra carried on the administration.

Passing through Kanchipur and Ningthou Khong, he reached the Leimatag. Crossing it he reached the Irang and then the bank of the Barak Following the course of the latter he reached Cachar. The king of Cachar presented him with a big amount of silver coins and cloths. Proceeding by boat on the Barak the king reached Bhanga where the Barak breaks up into two streams—the Surma and the Kushiara. Proceeding by boat on the Surma, he reached Sylhet where he had a formal meeting with the English Commissioner administering a number of districts. Presents were exchanged. Jai Singh's presents were artistic silk goods and a horse. The English Commissioner presented him with a telescope and two tents and provided him with an elephant, to carry his luggage to Tripura, and two armed sepoys for escort.

While in Sylhet, the king visited Dhaka Dakshin the ancestral home of Chaitanya's father and performed a *kirtan* (devotional music) there. Then he reached Agartala and gave his daughter Harisheshwari in marriage to Rajdhar Manik, the Rajah of Tripura.

The king proceeded with his retinue in a fleet of 67 boats out of which 15 were contributions from the Rajah of Tripura. The pilgrims proceeded on the Meghana and the Padma. He received a present of Rs. 700/- in British Indian coins sent by the Rajah of Tripura. Now the king sent back the boats contributed by the Rajah of Tripura and proceeded by land with his party till they reached an old channel of Ganga.

After proceeding on the old channel in the fleet of 52 boats for one day, the king sent all his boats to Nabadwip with some of his men and he and his party reached Krishnanagar by land.

The Rajah of Krishnanagar offered to accomodate him at a place called Ganga Bas which he politely declined and reached Nabadwip, a destination of his long cherished dreams. From Nabadwip, he went to Ambika, where the Vaishnavas of the place warmly received him and presented him with rice, salt, milk, ghee and sugar. He held a *kirtan*, with the team of singers from Manipur. The *kirtan* was widely appreciated by the local people. From Ambika the king returned to Nabadwip.

From Nabadwip, he proceeded on the Ganga by boat towards Vrindaban. But he died at Shripat Kshetra on the bank of the Ganga near Murshidabad on 12 October 1798. In tradition, he was cremated at the spot where Narottam, a great saint of Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism, was cremated before. His *shraddha* was held at Shripat Kshetra. Five teams of singers (*pala*)–three from Nabadwip, one from Shripat Kshetra and one from Manipur—sang.

Assessment of the reign

Bhagya Chandra ascended the throne for the second time at a crucial time. Had a man of lesser calibre been on the throne, Manipur would become an outlying, obscure district of the Burmese empire. This reign saw the emergence of Manipur as a great centre of dance and music. Manipuri dance struck firm roots to become one of the few outstanding classical dances of India. The trend of literature which began in the times of Pitambar Charai Rongba and Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz gathered further momentum. The literature was now richer.

Inspite of the three Burmese inroads, the kingdom was prosperous. We no longer hear of Manipuri gold coins. But there were silver coins. The Royal Chronicle mentions them on one occasion. Crimes were few and far between.

Stringent law was partly responsible, but Law without morals is of no avail. The high morality of the people was the main cause of this happy state of affairs In a long reign of 34 years, only one case of drinking came up for punishment Prevalence of drinking is a fair index of the prevalence of crimes The king pardoned the offenders in this case outright, because repetition by the offenders or spread of the crime to other people was very unlikely

Cultivation of good relations with Assam for ages paid dividend in this reign. The army from Assam however did not have to fire a single shot, because the Burmese retreated after occupying the capital for a very short time Relations with other parts of India were excellent

Manipur became the easternmost citadel of Vaishnavism in the reign of Garib Niwaz This role of Manipur in the cultural history of India was played in a grander way from the reign of Jai Singh onwards

Today, Indian dance is incomplete without Manipuri Ras, Indian literature is imcomplete without Manipuri literature and Indian music is incomplete without Manipuri *nata sankirtan* The flowering of this trend commenced in Jai Singh's reign

CHAPTER XVII

LABANYA CHANDRA AND MADHU CHANDRA

Labanya Chandra Singh, who had been administering the kingdom during the absence of his father, now ascended the throne in January 1799. News of the Rajarshi's death which happened on 12 October 1798, reached Manipur in December. Bhagya Chandra sent back, a few weeks before his death, the royal insignia he took with him in the pilgrimage. When Labanya Chandra ascended the throne, he was 44.

Kangla reoccupied

The king shifted the palace to Kangla which was abandoned for nearly 35 years from the times of Bhagya Chandra. Clearing of the place began in January, six days after the accession. The king's palace was three-storied. The construction began on Monday 5 Lamda (about March) 1799. Formal reoccupation of Kangla was on Monday, the full moon of Inga of the same year.

Events in Cachar

Cachar was an independent kingdom under the rule of a people called the Cachharis. According to the Royal Chronicle, a *fakir* (a Muslim mendicant) invaded the kingdom in Ingen (about July) 1799. This disturbed the life of the Manipuri population there. 635 Manipuri refugees came to Manipur.

Settlement of the Manipuris in the Sibsagar district of Assam began in the reign of Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra. Their settlement in Cachar also must have begun in that reign or a little earlier.

Samvatsar of the Rajarshi

The first anniversary of the death of Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra fell in 1799. Labanya Chandra observed it by performing, among other things, *kirtan* for 7 days. The *kirtan* commenced on Sunday, the last day of Langban. The ceremony of performing the *samvatsar* concluded with distribution of 10,00,000 coins in the market-places

Hostility with Burma

In January 1800, the Burmese burnt Tamu, a town in the Kabaw Valley It was a hostile act ; because the Kabaw Valley was in the dominion of Manipur The Senapati proceeded to Kakching to repel the Burmese. The chief of Tamu came to the Manipur capital. The Senapati changed his direction and proceeded towards the south. On Friday 28 Phairen (about February), the king went with an army to repulse the Burmese. On the way, the prince of Samjok paid his respects to the king After repelling the Burmese, the king returned to the capital on Tuesday 8 Lamda.

Flood

There was an untimely flood in November 1800. The swirling current of the river Imphal in high spate swept away Minuthong Bridge and Sanjenthong Bridge. The ripe, standing rice crop was submerged in many fields However, famine did not follow.

Literature

Chingthang Khomba Maharaj Ganga Chatpa (Maharajah Chingthang Khomba Going to the Ganga), a book dealing with, in detail, Bhagya Chandra's pilgrimage to the Ganga was

written in Labanya Chandra's reign. Our account of Bhagya Chandra's pilgrimage given in the last chapter is an abridgement of the book Some of the bits of information relating to it given in the present chapter are also from it.

Coinage

Some coins of Labanya Chandra have come down to us. They are perfectly circular and bear the letter *la* in Bengali script. The lettering is very distinct. The coins are not however large. The specimens examined by us measure only about 11 milimetres in diameter.

Law and order

The law and order situation was good. Only three cases of murder are recorded in the Royal Chronicle. There was also a case of a hill tribe raiding a village of plainsmen at the fringe of the Valley adjoining the hills. The offending hillmen were of course punished.

End of the reign

Labanya Chandra died on Saturday 27 Poinu (December) 1800 at the age of 46. The Royal Chronicle gives the reign as 3 years. But 2 years is more accurate.

MADHU CHANDRA

Madhu Chandra, a younger brother of Labanya Chandra, ascended the throne on Saturday 27 Poinu (December) 1800. He accompanied his father and fought against the Moamarias in Assam as we saw in the last chapter. Then as the Senapati, he accompanied his father in the pilgrimage to the Ganga and Vrindaban. When Madhu Chandra came to the throne, he was 36.

The new king made his younger brother Chourajit Yuvaraja and Marjit, another younger brother, Senapati.

Improvement of a main salt-well

The first development work the new king took up was the improvement of the salt-well at Chandra Khong. It

was a main salt-well. Jagadananda, a prince, and Haobam Kumudananda, who was then the Master of Stores, led the work. It began on Friday 23 Phairen (about February) 1801.

Kanchipur second capital

After the occupation of Kangla in 1799 in Labanya Chandra's reign, Madhu Chandra made Kanchipur the second capital. It was the capital of Manipur from May 1779 to April 1796 in the reign of Bhagya Chandra. Madhu Chandra selected a new site close to the spot of the old palace of his father. In May 1803, the king dug a few ponds near the site of the new palace at Kanchipur and constructed brick walls for the intended temple of Govindajee. Bricks for the wall were made in the preceding February. Making of the new palace took about 10 months.

In February 1804 (25 Phairen 1725 Shakabda), the king, courtiers, prominent people and the masses went to Kanchipur with the image of Govindajee. The temple complex was dedicated to Him.

Manufacture of muskets

The reign of Madhu Chandra was free from Burmese invasions. But to enhance the defence capability, some double-barrel guns were manufactured, thus continuing the process begun in the reign of Bhagya Chandra. The making of double-barrel guns began in April 1801 soon after Madhu Chandra's accession.

It may be mentioned that double-barrel guns were prized weapons in this part of India at the beginning of the 19th century.

Construction of the coronation hall

Kangla was occupied in the previous reign after about 35 years. But the coronation hall could not be built in Labanya Chandra's time. Madhu Chandra took up the uncompleted work of his brother and built the Coronation Hall.

Buildings of those days were of wood. It took only about 2½ months to complete the building Construction started in March and was completed in May.

Govindajee's temple and mandap

After the occupation of Kangla, a temple to Govindajee was built there Attached to the temple, a *mandap* (prayer hall) was also built The temple and the *mandap* were inaugurated on Monday the new moon of Sajibhu (about April) 1801

Coronation of Madhu Chandra

Coronation of the king was held on Thursday 17 Kalen (May), 1801 in the new Coronation Hall. He was accompanied on the throne by his queen of Haobam family The king, when he was crowned, was given the name Tamlen Khomba The queen was likewise given the name Yanglei Ngambi

The names are a little strange to us 'Tamlen Khomba' means Conqueror of Flood and 'Yanglei Ngambi' means 'Conqueress of Wine' In this part of eastern India prone to floods several times every monsoon, where the rivers call for eternal vigilence if floods are to be avoided, did the Manipuris of those days dream of permanently controlling flood for health, longevity, comfort and economic advancement ? Had the Manipuris of those days realised the devilish effects of wine on the drunkard, his family, relatives, society and country ? Did they aspire to conquer permanently the temptation of wine which has been bedevilling mankind since the dawn of civilisation ? The reign-names seem to point to these directions

The prince of the Angoms

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the Angom Principality which was at one time independent was absorbed in the Ningthouja kingdom The prince of the Angoms became a noble of the Ningthouja king. Still, the coronation of the princes of the Angoms went on.

The coronation of the prince of the Angoms was held on Sunday 17 Inga (about June) 1801.

Image of Chaitanya

In Chaitanya's school of Vaishnavism, Chaitanya is not merely a saint. He is worshipped. So are Nityananda and Advaita Acharya, two saints, who helped Chaitanya, in propagating his form of Vaishnavism

Bhagya Chandra founded an image of Nityananda and an image of Advaita Acharya. Manipuri Hindus call Nityananda *prabhu* (lord) and Advaita Acharya also *prabhu* ; but they call Chaitanya *maha prabhu* (great lord). Bhagya Chandra in the midst of multifarious duties of state could not found an image of Chaitanya for worship in Manipur. Madhu Chandra founded an image of Chaitanya and sent it to Bishnupur for worship.

Pilgrimages to Vrindaban

Up to the reign of Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra, people of Manipur went on pilgrimage upto Nabadwip (West Bengal) only to bathe in the Ganga. The Rajarshi broke new ground by attempting to reach Vrindaban from Nabadwip but died on the way near Murshidabad (West Bengal). His son Chourajit reached Vrindaban with a portion of his ashes and returned to Manipur in April 1800.

From the reign of Madhu Chandra onwards, people of Manipur went beyond Nabadwip on pilgrimages to Vrindaban.

Birth of Sanjenba (Gopa Ras)

A dance-drama entitled Sanjenba ('Tending Cows'), said to be known as Gopa Ras in Uttar Pradesh and some other states, was formulated in the reign of Madhu Chandra. It is based on Book X of the Bhagavata.*

*The main anecdotes of the story : The cowherd boys assemble at the house of Nanda the king of the cowherds and the foster-father of Krishna and Bala Rama ; Yashoda, foster-mother of Krishna, calls out Madhumangala, a friend

On Friday 13 Hiyangei 1803, there was a performance of Sanjenba at the house of a certain Angom When the large number of spectators and participants crossed Minuthong Bridge, it gave way under the heavy weight Most of the participants fell in the River Imphal. Two persons died

Indu Prabha

The king gave his daughter Indu Prabha in marriage to Krishna Chandra king of Cachar in 1802 Negotiations for the marriage began in Inga (about June) 1801 The final stages of the negotiation were conducted on behalf of Cachar by its chief minister who arrived in the capital with 277 officials in Lamda (about March) 1802

The princess started for her new home on Tuesday 17 Sajibhu (April) 1802 While going to Cachar she distributed coins in the Royal Market She was escorted by prince Phairaba (a son of Labanya Chandra) and Haobam Nongthomba

'Surya grahan'

There was a solar eclipse on Saturday the new moon of Thawan 1802 In recording it, the Royal Chronicle uses the expression *surya grahan* (solar eclipse) and not the age-old expression the 'sun devoured by the wolf'. Previous solar eclipses are recorded by using the latter expression except in the case of the solar eclipse of Tuesday the new

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of Krishna, gives him sweets for distribution to the cowherdboys, Nanda reluctantly gives permission to Krishna to go to the forest to tend cows, the cowherd boys go with Krishna and Rama to the forest; a demon sent by Kangsa comes in the guise of a bull to kill Krishna, Balarama kills the demon, another demon sent by Kangsa comes disguised as an egret, Krishna kills him, the cowherd boys, Krishna and Balarama return to Nanda's house

The part of the dance-drama relating to the tending of cows and killing the demons is played on a meadow, and the rest, in a *mandap*.

moon of Hiyangei (about November) 1789 in the reign of Jai Singh. On that occasion also the term surya grahan is used.

The use of the term *surya grahan* is significant. It suggests that the old belief of the people in the existence of a cosmic wolf causing eclipses by temporarily devouring the sun or the moon was disappearing Its place was taken by a belief in Rahu (a nodal demon) causing eclipses.

Relations with neighbours

There was no war with Burma in this reign. But we cannot call it meaningful peace. It was merely absence of war. There was no intercourse with Assam in this reign. Authorities in Assam probably sealed the border. Relation with Cachar was good as is evidenced by the marriage of Indu Prabha. Tripura is not mentioned in the Royal Chronicle in this reign ; but the relation was probably good as is evidenced by the conduct of the Rajah of Tripura during Bhagya Chandra's pilgrimage and the marriage of Harisheshwari to Rajadhar Manik, the Raja of Tripura.

Relations with other parts of India continued to be good as shown by the pilgrimage of the Manipuris to the Ganga and other holy places and the visits of mendicants to Manipur.

Law and order

The absence of Burmese invasions in this reign was conducive to the maintenance of law and order. There was no rebellion either, till the king's brother Chaurajit rebelled. The absence of rebellion too helped maintenance of law and order. The hill areas were also peaceful throughout the reign. Expeditions to hill villages were not necessary. There was also no case of a hill tribe attacking another hill tribe.

Madhu Chandra's reign was not long. But during that period, there was all-round peace. The only incident which caused a minor ruffle was the discovery of some bullets

on the top of a hill on 12 Hiyangei 1803. Some people had evidently carried them up there. Was it a preliminary stage of attempting a *coup* ?

Crime and punishment

A topic clearly connected with law and order is crime and punishment. In this reign also there was no execution for committing murder by a free man. Amputation of a limb was awarded instead of capital punishment. Thus on 29 Lamda (about March) 1801, a man of Chinese origin whose ancestors had migrated to Manipur long ago, was found guilty of murdering his son-in-law He was not executed ; but one hand was amputated

The law was more stringent for slaves. If a slave murdered his master or his master's wife, the slave got capital punishment. Thus on 25 Langban (about September) 1802, a slave was found guilty of mudering his mistress. He was executed

Assassination (as distinguished from ordinary murder) or attempted assassination was punishable with death. Thus a servant of a certain Angom stabbed a servant of a prince on 15 Ingen (about July) 1802 The offender was executed.

A complicated case came up for trial in Sajibhu (about April) 1803. One Khelananda, the husband of the daughter of a junior officer, was murdered by two of his slaves in April 1803. His dead body was thrown into a river

The murder took place on the second Sajibhu. Investigation was completed within 6 days The case came up for hearing on the 8th Sajibhu. Out of the 3 accused, 2 who actually committed the crime were blinded and the third accused was transported to Ithai. The father of the woman was stripped of his office. The facts of the case given in the Royal Chronicle are not clear whether he was tried for abetment.

Theft was punishable with mutilation of a hand or a foot as in ancient times. Thus in Inga (about June) 1801, three thieves were arrested by three private individuals.

The thieves were tried on the 23rd Inga. Each of the thieves was punished with mutilation of one foot.

Perjury was punishable with transportation. Thus in December 1801, one Koireng gave false evidence in a case of attempted rebellion. He was punished with transportation to the penal settlement at Ithai.

What impresses us in the 20th century is the speed with which investigation was completed Trial also took only one day. Private individuals also effectively arrested thieves, if the theft was committed in their presence.

Coinage

Madhu Chandra's coins like those of his brother Labanya Chandra were perfectly circular and unifaced. They bore the letter *ma* either in Manipuri script or Bengali script. The workmanship is fine and the lettering, superior, as in the case of the coins of Labanya Chandra. Manipuri kings also issued perfectly circular unifaced bronze coins inscribed with the word *Shree* in Deva Nagari script. Any king might issue these coins. Goddess Lakshmi is called Shree. The word Shree also means prosperity, auspiciousness etc

All coins of Madhu Chandra so far discovered are of bronze. The letter *ma* is the initial letter of the king's name.

Adaptation of Ashwamedha Parva

This reign saw the adaptation of Ashwamedha Parva of the Mahabharata in Manipuri. It was from the Mahabharata of Gangadas Sen, son of Shashthivara Sen. Gangadas Sen lived in Jhinargram in the District of Dacca (now in Bangla Desh) and flourished in or about the 17th century.

The recension of the Mahabharata most popular in Manipur today is that of Kashidas. But it was not available to the Manipuris in the 18th century. So in the reign of Garib Niwaz, the story of Parikshit was adapted

in Manipuri from Gangadas Sen's Mahabharata. In the reign of Madhu Chandra also, Ashwamedha Parva of the Mahabharata was adapted from Gangadas Sen's work.

The adaptation is a great achievement running into at least 14 chapters. A drive for collection of old Manipuri manuscripts is now going on. The first 6 chapters and the 14th chapter have been edited and published by different scholars. A further hunt might yield some more chapters.

As we have seen, Virata Parva was adapted in Bhagya Chandra's reign. Why did the Manipuris of the time of Madhu Chandra single out Ashwamedha Parva out of the remaining *parvas* for detailed adaptation ? The reason is that Ashwamedha Parva extols the greatness of Krishna. Vaishnavism was the prime mover of nearly all progress in Manipur in Madhu Chandra's reignas in the times of his father Bhagya Chandra and great-grandfather Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz.

Chaurajit's rebellion

Chaurajit rebelled in 1803. He went to Cachar. The king sent two responsible officers to persuade him to come back but they returned without success. In 1804, about the end of February, Chaurajit invaded the kingdom with a strong force from Cachar. Madhu Chandra made the mistake of sending a force without accompanying it personally. Chaurajit advanced upto the capital and occupied it. Madhu Chandra fled to Cachar in 1804, about the beginning of March, and his reign came to an end.

The two reigns : assessment

In the reigns of Labanya Chandra and Madhu Chandra, Manipur was still in the Late Medieval Age. The beliefs, laws, customs and tastes of the Manipuris were still medieval , but the advent of modern age was round the corner.

Woods and grass jungles still covered parts of the Manipur Valley. We no longer hear of wolves and rhinoceroses ;

but tigers gave occasional trouble. The Royal Chronicle records the capture of several tigers in the two reigns. Lakes were not as numerous as in the days of Garib Niwaz because of the gradual silting up. But shallow lakes or rather fens covered some areas now dry land. Thus, what is now the complex of Govindajee's temple, Maharajah Bodha Chandra College and the All India Radio was a shallow lake in this period. It was called Guru Pat i.e. Guru's Lake.

The expansion of the mental horizon begun in the reign of Kiyamba continued with acceleration. In the reign of Madhu Chandra, the Manipuris looked as far as Vrindaban in the north-west and Puri in the south-west. South India and Western India had not yet come into their range. The literature they produced in or a little before this period shows their mental horizon. We may mention in particular *Veersingh Panchalee* and *Chandragantha*. The latter work shows that the Manipuris of this period were interested in the legends of King Vikramaditya and King Bhoja.

Economically, the people were well-to-do. They had enough good, wholesome, simple food to eat. But their houses were made of wood or bamboo and roofed with thatch-grass (Manipuri *ee* ; Sanskrit *ulika*). Woollens were not unfamiliar but the people used mostly cottons, which they had in plenty. The hills of Manipur produced plenty of short-staple cotton. Women of the Valley spun and wove.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHAURAJIT AND MARJIT

Chaurajit came to the throne on Sunday 9 Lamda 1804 at the age of 27. He appointed his brother Marjit Yuvaraja.

Madhu Chandra's invasion

Madhu Chandra with the help of the king of Cachar invaded Manipur to regain his throne. The news of his coming reached the capital on 5 Kalen 1804. On 12 Kalen, the king and his brother Marjit set out to engage him. The next day the king spent the night at Hiyangthang and worshipped Devi the goddess of war to ensure success. Marjit proceeded with the royal army and encamped at Mayang Keinou. Madhu Chandra reached Shamupan on 14 Kalen. Marjit proceeded there. There was a fierce fighting for 3 hours. Madhu Chandra fell in battle on 14 Kalen.

100 of Madhu Chandra's soldiers died in the battle. 600 were captured by the royal army. One cannon of bronze, one cannon of iron, 50 Ramjangees, 148 muskets, 100 swords and 100 shields were also captured by the royal army.

Coronation of Chaurajit

The coronation of the new king was held on Saturday 12 Wakching 1805. A certain Kunjadas, a non-Manipuri, brought water from Radha Kunda (Uttar Pradesh) to be mixed with the water for pouring on the king. 108 Brahmin maidens poured water on the king. His queen of Laishram family accompanied him on the throne.

The Brahmin girls were given *dakshina* in salt. Kunjadas was given one hectare of revenue-free land.

Realisation of tribute

Eleven villages and tiny administrative units in outlying hill areas and the Kabaw Valley were in arrears of tribute. In Phairen (late January or early February) 1805, the chiefs came and paid their tribute in gold and silver. This was an index of the growing power of the Manipuris. The villages and the units had been in arrears for 41 years since the time of Bhagya Chandra.

Cottage industries

Cottage industries made some progress in Chaurajit's reign. The Royal Chronicle records that manufacture of sugar began on 5 Lamda (March) 1804. This cannot be the first manufacture of sugar. The Royal Chronicle uses the word *chini angouba* (white sugar) to denote it as distinguished from *chini angangba* (brown sugar). The entry can only mean that sugar was manufactured on a greater scale. The Royal Chronicle also records the first making of mats of ivory. It was on Wednesday the first of Inga (about June), 1805.

Vasanta Ras

We have already noticed Maha Ras based on the 10th book of the Bhagavata. There is another form of Ras known as the Vasanta Ras. It is based on the well-known Sanskrit lyric *Geeta Govinda* of Jayadeva who flourished in Bengal in the 12th century.

The first mention of Vasanta Ras in the Royal Chronicle is in the entry of 15 Sajibhu (April) 1805. On that day the dance was performed outside the palace compound. Soon afterwards, a grove was made in the palace compound and it was named *pulin ban* meaning the 'grove on the sandy bank' (*pulin*, a sandy bank ; *ban*, a grove/forest). There Vasanta Ras was performed for 5 days from the 11th of Kalen to the 15th of Kalen 1806.

It may be noted that Kalen (roughly May) is in summer and not spring. Vasanta Ras as the name suggests should be performed in spring. In our time, it is performed on the fullmoon of Sajibhu (roughly April). The time for Vasanta Ras was not yet standardised in the reign of Chaurajit.

Development works

The king developed the salt-wells at Chandra Khong and Waikhong. He opened new bazars at different places in the Valley. A new shop was opened at Ningen, the most important salt-manufacturing village in the kingdom. The Royal Chronicle also records that a shop was opened at each of these 3 gates of the palace viz the western gate, the northern gate and the southern gate. Mango trees were planted in the palace compound as avenue trees. Pipal trees were planted on a wide scale outside the palace. The road to Cachar was improved. Masonary works of lion (supposed to be dragons by English writers and officers) were built in front of the coronation hall.

A hall with 84 pillars was built and it was appropriately named Chaurasi Khamba. A new temple named Nava Ratna (lit. the Nine Gems) was built in March 1804. It was inaugurated the same year in April.

A notable event of this reign is the manufacture of several cannon of bronze and iron.

Relation with other parts of India

The good relation with other parts of India continued as before. There were pilgrimages to Vrindaban. We seldom hear of pilgrimages to the Ganga now; because those who went to Vrindaban bathed in the Ganga *en route* to Vrindaban In 1806, the king sent fairly large amounts of silver coins to Nabadwip, Puri and Vrindaban as offerings to God. Some descendants of Nityananda, who actively helped Chaitanya to spread his form of Vaishnavism, visited Manipur. They returned to Bengal in Phairen (about February) 1814.

Foreign relations

The age-old unfriendly relations with Burma somewhat improved in this reign The king of Burma sent messengers on a number of occasions to get a Manipuri bride. A descen dant of a former king was sent to Burma as the bride of the Burmese king in 1807. Manipur continued to exercise sovereignty over the Kabaw Valley as is evidenced by realisation of tributes.

The relation with Burma was not however entirely peaceful. There were occasional conflicts Thus in 1805, Burmese nationals infiltrated into Kabaw Valley and fished a river The king sent Marjit with troops to chase them away. In 1806 also, intelligence reached the capital that the Burmese had crossed the frontier with intent to invade The king sent troops to repel them

Relation with China was never intimate. It was a case of Manipuri merchants visiting the fringe of China and a few Chinese visiting Manipur as tourists or merchants. A certain Lukramba Tanchou who visited China brought from there an apple as big as a citron and presented it to the king in 1807. In May 1811, five Chinese tourists arrived in Manipur

Marjit's rebellion

The king's younger brother Marjit who was the Yuvaraja rebelled in 1806. He went to Lansonbi, a village on what is now the New Cachar Road, and collected followers. His plan was detected and he fled towards Burma. The king attempted reconciliation but without success. Marjit encamped at Tamu, which was then under the suzerainty of Manipur, and openly challenged the authority of the king. The king again sent a Brahmin as an envoy to effect reconciliation. It again failed.

In January 1807, Marjit advanced upto Palle. The king sent an army to stop his advance. After some fighting Marjit

advanced upto Hangoon where his men killed some officers of the royal army. The king sent more troops and there was a battle at Shamurou (some 8 miles to the south of Imphal). The king's army retreated and Marjit advanced upto Yaiskul less than half a mile from the southern gate of the palace. Now fighting ensued at the southern gate itself. The king led his troops. After killing some notable persons. Marjit proceeded to the western gate.

Marjit attempted to enter the western gate. In resisting him, the king's army lost some more important officers. A regular hand to hand fighting raged at the Royal Market-place also. The king ordered his men not to shoot Marjit as he was his brother. Marjit was forced to retreat from the western gate, what is now the western gate of the Assam Rifles. He encamped at what is now the compound of Raj Bhavan.

At this stage, many important officers and some Brahmins openly expressed their unwillingness to witness the civil war between the two brothers and retired.

The king encamped at what is now the pologround and sent messengers offering to give Marjit half the kingdom. He even went to the extent of offering to abdicate, if Marjit wanted the whole kingdom ; but insisted on his temporary withdrawal from the capital to avoid bloodshed. Marjit rejected all the terms.

The same day two hours after sunset, he entered the palace compound and burnt a number of important buildings including a temple and a *mandap* (prayer hall). The king was at the pologround. The civil war took a dramatic turn on the 26th Wakching (January). The king appointed Phairaba, a son of Labanya Chandra, Senapati (Commander-in-chief). A continuous battle raged for 5 days, night and day. Marjit now led his men through the northern gate and burnt more buildings in the palace compound and

destroyed the southern gate of the palace and let in his men. Taking a favourable stand in the palace-compound, he fired cannon towards the king's camp on the pologround.

The king took a few of his most trusted bodyguard, entered the palace compound and engaged Marjit in a hand-to-hand fighting. Chourajit-cut Marjit's reins and the latter fell from his horse Marjit's men attacked the rearguard of the royal troops who replied with Assamese guns. Marjit's men were now in disarray and fled. Marjit too fled towards Burma, leaving behind 300 Shan troops Biramani, the Prince of the Angoms, and Phairaba, the Commander-in-chief, chased him upto Pallel

The Shan troops left by Marjit were taken prisoner as prisoners of war They were released after one month and six days and allowed to return to their villages

Adaptation of a work on the Geeta

A Bengali work on the Bhagavat Geeta by Govinda Mishra was adapted in Manipuri. Parashu Ram Longjam made the necessary arrangement for the adaptation. The actual work of writing the book was done by Brajananda Oinamcha. The work is not a translation or a gist. Sometimes it paraphrases and sometimes it abridges We may call it an essay.

The Manipuri book says that the original Geeta was in Sanskrit, the language of the gods and that Govinda Mishra rendered it into the 'unfamiliar language of Bengal.' It was Parashu Ram's ambition to render the words of Lord Krishna into the 'father-tongue'* of the Manipuris so that whenever a Manipuri heard the Gita in the 'fathertongue' and gained spiritual merit, he too might get a share in the merit for his and his wife Vrinda Rani's salvation.

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*Modern Manipuris call their language their *matri bhasha* (mothertongue). But their ancestors upto the 19th century called it their father tongue or *ipallon* The expression 'father-tongue' is not countenanced in the English language although in German, there is a corresponding expression.

Marjit's second rebellion

After staying in Burma for some time, Marjit returned to the capital with 2 elephants in April 1808. Two Burmese envoys also came with him. There was a reconciliation with his brother for the time being.

After about 8 months, Marjit again rebelled. In December 1808 he went to Lansonbi, gathered a force and rebelled. He made a nearby village called Khudeiband his headquarters and held out against the king's army for one month. He then fled to Cachar from where he went to Burma to seek asylum.

Marjit's invasion

The king of Burma at this time was Badaw-paya (1779-1819). According to the Royal Chronicle, Badaw-paya at first advised Marjit to make peace with his brother, which he did not agree. The historicity of this entry is not yet investigated into. But it is also recorded there that the Burmese king ultimately helped him with one lakh (according to another interpretation, ten thousand) troops.

Intelligence of Marjit's contemplated invasion reached the Manipur capital in February 1814. At that time the king was at Leimatag on an official tour. He cut short his tour and returned to the capital. Marjit entered the Valley with Burmese troops at the beginning of April 1814. Chaurajit personally led the Manipuri troops and engaged the invading army at Kakching Panjao for 11 days. Marjit ultimately won and Chaurajit fled to Cachar.

Chaurajit's reign: assessment

Chaurajit reigned 10 years from March 1804 to the beginning of April 1814. But only the first three years were productive. The rest of the reign was mostly spent in counteracting the rebellions and the rebellious tendency of Marjit and reconstructing what Marjit destroyed in the rebellions.

Chaurajit's addition of some cannon to the arsenal was a welcome measure. So was the advancement in the production of sugar. His realisation of tributes from chiefs in the Kabaw Valley reflects the growing military power of Manipur. The making of Rasmandal and Pulinban; the construction of Chaurasi Khamba and the naming of a newly dug pond as Vaishnavi Ganga all show the growing connection of Manipur with the culture of Vrindaban and its neighbourhood.

MARJIT

Marjit won his victory on the 16th day of Sajibhu and entered the palace on Wednesday 17 Sajibhu 1814. He ascended the throne the same day. He was 34.

Coronation

The coronation of Marjit was held on Monday 13 Kalen 1814. He was accompanied on the throne by his queen of Thokchom family. According to the age-old custom, a military expedition was sent. It returned with 4 prisoners of war.

New temple of Govindajee

Construction of a new temple of Govindajee began on Wednesday 2 Phairen (about February) 1816. The word used in the Royal Chronicle for this temple is *phura*. Therefore, it was a small temple of brick. It was inaugurated on Wednesday 22 Kalen May 1817. We find no trace of it now.

Ramlila

On 16 Hiyangei (about November) 1817, Ramlila was performed in all the four sectors of the capital city viz. Khurai, Wangkhei, Khwai and Yaiskul. It was a new form of entertainment cum instruction. It was on the lines of what is now called *shumang lila* or folk drama. The story of Ram was put, probably for the first time in this kingdom, in this form of art.

Invasion of Cachar

Marjit invaded Cachar in November 1817. The king of Cachar at this time was Govinda Chandra. (1813-1830). An Englishman was the head of Govinda Chandra's army at this time'[1]. On the approach of the Manipuri army under Marjit, the Englishman left Govinda Chandra's service[2]. Govinda Chandra protested to the East India Company for it[3]. According to British records, Gambheer Singh, a younger son of Jai Singh, fought on the side of Govinda Chandra.

According to the Royal Chronicle, the Manipuri army lost two notable persons Thangjam Roopa Chandra and Nongmaithem Leirikhomba but won the victory and Marjit dug a canal at the Cachar capital to commemorate his victory.

The king's new residence

In June 1818, building of a new residence of the king began. The plinth was 18 feet high or in the words of the Royal Chronicle, '3 fathoms'. It had 7 rooms. It was roofed with planks covered with gilded metal sheets. Two ornamental ponds were dug to the east of the king's residence and they were decorated with a few plates of gold.

The Coronation Hall and some other important buildings also were roofed with planks covered with gilded metal sheets. The planks for the king's residence and the other buildings were from the Kabaw Valley.

Irrigation canal

The king planned to dig an irrigation canal from Kyamgei, a suburb of Imphal, to Heiyen, a village to the south of Imphal. The canal would be some 10 miles long. It would also be used for draining away excess water from the rice-fields. Digging of the canal began on Friday 13 Langban

1 to 3. D Datta : Cachar District Records.

(about September) 1819. It was named Mairen Khong meaning Pumpkin Canal. It passed through Chajing, another suburb of Imphal.

Contemplated palace

Marjit desired to build a palace at Khurai. Actual work at the chosen site began in September 1819. Building brick walls enclosing the site of the contemplated palace began in December. But before they were completed, the Burmese invaded Manipur.

Coinage

Marjit's coins were similar to those of his brothers Labanya Chandra and Madhu Chandra. They were small, perfectly round bronze coins. They bore the inscription maa (*ma akar*) being the initial letters of the king's name Marjit. The specimens we examined bear the inscription in Bengali script

Burmese invasion

We have seen that the planks for the king's residence and some other buildings in the palace-compound were from the Kabaw Valley. The timbers for the planks were felled in February 1816. The Burmese king Badaw-paya did not like the Manipuri king fell timber in the Kabaw Valley. But he could do nothing against Manipur. He was succeeded on the throne by Bagyidaw (1819-1837).

According to Burmese sources, the new Burmese king summoned the Manipuri king to come to Burma to pay homage to him, which Marjit refused. According to the same sources, he Burmese king sent troops under a general named Maha Bandula in 1819 to invade Manipur for this. According o the Royal Chronicle, a Burmese envoy reached the Manipur apital on 28 Poinu (December) 1819. But within 4 days, he Burmese invaded Manipur and Marjit with the whole rmy went to repel them.

Severe fighting began on Tuesday the 5th of Wakching and continued for 8 days On Tuesday 12 Wakching, the Manipuris were overpowered by force of numbers. Marjit fled to Cachar The Burmese overran the Manipur Valley The ordeal of Manipur called Seven Years' Devastation commenced

Marjit's reign : assessment

The Royal Chronicle puts the length of Marjit's reign at 7 years But 5 years and 8 months is a much more accurate figure Making of a playground in a village construction of a brick temple of Govindajee and the digging of a long irrigation canal are the main achievements of this reign The attempt to build an additional palace and the construction of gilded buildings were steps in the wrong direction The gold spent for the gold-leaf should have been spent for enhancing the defence capability and welfare measures. The welfare measures would improve the quality of the people for defending the frontiers and for rising higher on the rungs of civilisation

Marjit's taking the help of Burma for ascending the throne is difficult to defend The Burmese did not invade Manipur in Madhu Chandra's reign Barring pin-pricks, they did not cause trouble in Chaurajit's reign also. It was only when Manipur was weakened by internal strife that the Burmese agreed to help Marjit ascend the throne On the other hand, it is wrong to take all statements in Burmese records as Gospel-truths without examining Manipuri records

With the end of Marjit's reign, we come to the end of Late Medieval Age in this hill girt kingdom on the eastern frontier of India Soon after this reign, winds of change swept Manipur ushering in modern age In the succeeding reigns the kingdom was integrated more closely with the rest of India politically, economically and culturally

1819 – 1826

CHAPTER XIX

THE BURMESE WAR

After the collapse of the government, the Burmese advanced to the capital and occupied it The people of the Valley evacuated to the hills and remained there watching the movements of the invading army Twentysix days passed The Burmese generals—Pakhan Woon and Kane Woon—by a strategem called down some Manipuris from the hills on 10 Phairen 1820 and entrapped them

The bulk of the Burmese left for their country carrying away the entrapped Manipuris and other Manipuris numbering altogether about 30,000 The Royal Chronicle gives the date as Tuesday 10 Phairen 1820 Kane Woon remained with 2,000 troops at the capital They encamped at what is now the Polo Ground

Guerrilla War

The Manipuris now decided to wage guerrilla war. Prince Hera Chandra, a son of Labanya Chandra, came down from the hills inhabited by the Khongjais and raised a guerrilla army of patriotic Manipuris This was on Friday 3 Sajibhu (roughly April) 1820. More and more, patriotic Manipuris came forward to join the Guerrillas. The Royal Chronicle refers to the Guerrillas as Daku Tengon (literal meaning the Dacoit Army') ; because their strategy and *modus operandi* were like those of dacoits

The first encounter

The Burmese got a scent of the Manipuri action plan to attack them. So they stopped foraying from 6 Kalen (about May) and remained confined to their camp But their provisions ran short in a few days Impelled by hunger, a detachment of 500 Burmese troops ventured towards Moirang (about 27 miles to the south of Imphal) to gather paddy, vegetables and other necessaries On Tuesday 9 Kalen the Guerrillas led by Hera Chandra intercepted them and killed 200 out of the 500 Burmese troops Angom Subunathmani, Akoijam Khamba, Elangba Amu, Mayengba Shyam and Moirangthem Lavanga assisted Hera Chandra.

Arrival of Yumjao Taba

On 12 Kalen 1820, Prince Yumjao Taba, a son of Madhu-Chandra, arrived at Maklang (about 9 miles north-west of Imphal) coming down from the hills Hera Chandra went there and gave him a hearty welcome Hera Chandra sobbed and then asked indignantly "How shall we let this land fall into ruins ?" Yumjao Taba asked What equipments have you ?" Hera Chandra replied "50 horses 12 muskets and 800 guerrillas" "Good ! We must fight them !" said Yumjao Taba He gave his cousin all he brought—2 horses, 5 swords and 3 muskets. The immortal dialogue is from the Royal Chronicle.

Yumjao Taba spelt out his plan. He would go to the Burmese camp unarmed, pose as their man and bring out the Burmese from their fortified camp Hera Chandra warned him of the grave personal danger and dissuaded him Braving personal danger, Yumjao Taba went to the Burmese camp unarmed and with only 4 attendants

The Burmese general believed Yumjao Taba and divulged to him that they were starving. He told him to procure some paddy somehow On 21 Kalen (roughly May), the Burmese

general placed 100 Burmese troops at his disposal. Yumjao Taba went to Sekmai (about 12 miles north-west of Imphal) and returned on 24 Kalen with some paddy.

The second encounter

On 5 Inga (about June) 1820, the Burmese general Kane Woon, placed 200 Burmese troops with 40 horses and 20 muskets at the disposal of Yumjao Taba and asked him to fight with Hera Chandra. He also gave him 2 swords with silver hilts. Yumjao Taba took the Burmese to Heiyen, a somewhat distant village.

Yumjao Taba met Hera Chandra and the two cousins killed all the 200 Burmese. All their equipments became the property of the Guerrillas.

More encounters

After resting one day, the two cousins reached the capital on Sunday, 7 Inga. Yumjao Taba occupied Khomidog (about 3 miles to the north of Imphal) and built a stockaded position to prevent the Burmese from coming out of their camp. Hera Chandra built his camp at Moirangkhom (about half a mile to the south of the present zero milestone). On 4 Ingen, Hera Chandra killed the major part of the Burmese troops stationed at Kakching. The remainder escaped and fled towards the Manipur capital. They were persued and all of them were killed at Chaobog.

On 7 Ingen (about July), Hera Chandra shifted his stockaded position to Singjamei (about 2 miles to south of the present zero milestone). On Wednesday 7 Thawan (about August), the Guerrillas engaged the Burmese occupation troops. Moirangthem Lavanga, a Guerrilla, killed Amupalap, the leader of a Burmese contingent, and caught 10 Burmese troops alive and captured 30 muskets including a double-barrel musket. On the same day in the north sector, Yumjao Taba defeated the Burmese, caught alive 5 Burmese troops including a gunner, and captured a cannon—a prized weapon to the Guerrillas.

Burmese reinforcement

About 3 months and 10 days after the Burmese debacle, they reinforced their occupation troops at the Manipur capital. On 16 Hiyangei (about November) 1820, ten thousand Burmese troops led by Pakhan Woon arrived at Kakching (about 27 miles to the north-east of Imphal). The Guerrillas tried to halt their advance at Thoubal (about 14 miles south-east of Imphal). A pitched battle ensued on 20 Hiyangei in front of a hill called, Chinga. There were not enough Guerrillas to tackle 10,000 Burmese troops at a time. The Burmese won. The two cousins fled towards Cachar.

The Burmese new arrivals remained at the capital for about 2 months and 18 days. At the end of the period Kanen Woon, who had all along been in Manipur since the beginning of the War, and Pakhan Woon returned to their country with their troops. This was on Sunday 9 Phairen (about February) 1821. They carried away about 30,000 Manipuri civilians to populate Burma.

Before the Burmese left, they appointed Huidromba Subal administrator. He was Laipham Lakpa (a high revenue officer) in Marjit's time.

Return of the Guerrillas

3 days after the Burmese troops left, Hera Chandra returned to the capital. Under his leadership, the Guerrillas attacked Subal. It appears that Subal came round to the views of the Guerrillas. Two days later, Yumjao Taba reached Maklang. Hera Chandra and Subal went there and gave him a hearty welcome.

YUMJAO TABA

Yumjao Taba entered the Palace with his men on Sunday 16 Phairen 1821 and ascended the throne. He reigned 2 months and 9 days only. But he was an independent king. Hera Chandra and he protected the people of Manipur against

Burmese atrocities, as much as they could, for 1 year and 2 months since Marjit left. We have seen some of the exploits of the dauntless Guerrillas. There was now no Burmese in Manipur. The administrator they appointed also supported him.

Hera Chandra never became the king. The Royal Chronicle refers to him as Daku Ningthou (the king of dacoits) but nowhere mentions that he entered the palace or became the king. It was through his magnanimity that Yumjao Taba became the king without any contest. They were first cousins and Yumjao Taba was senior by some years.

Achievement of Yumjao Taba

The time was abnormal and the reign was very short. The king's time and energy were absorbed mainly in the routine work of day to day administration. But the Royal Chronicle was nicely maintained. Even after the collapse of Marjit's government in December 1819, the Royal Chronicle continued to be written without any gap, thanks to the labours of Hera Chandra and Yumjao Taba

GAMBHEER SINGH

On Thursday 26 Sajibhu (April) 1821, Gambheer Singh, a son of Jai Singh, arrived in the capital from Cachar. Yumjao Taba stepped down and Gambheer Singh became the king Gambheer Singh was Yumjao Taba's uncle (father's brother).

Gambheer Singh's achievement

He maintained the Royal Chronicle nicely like his nephew Yumjao Taba. He led an expedition to a hill area. The name of the place is not recorded. The outcome is not recorded either.

Famine

A severe famine stalked the land in August 1821. It was natural. Agriculture was almost neglected because of the abnormal time and the almost desolate condition of the Valley. Adequate attention could not be given to flood control.

Paddy sold at 12,000 *sel* coins a *sangbai*. A large number of people died in the famine. Cremation could not be arranged for all those who died

RULERS UNDER BURMESE SUZERAINTY

Gambheer Singh like Yumjao Taba was an independent king. The Burmese saw that Manipur was slipping away from their control. But they could not venture to station an occupation army at the Manipur capital. The want and privation of Burmese troops in Manipur in the previous attempt and the dangers from the Guerrillas were still vivid in the minds of Burmese generals and the rank and file. The Burmese now hit upon the device of appointing rulers under their suzerainty.

Jai the first such ruler to be appointed by the Burmese king, arrived in Manipur on Tuesday 21 Mera (roughly October) 1821. He made Thoubal Moijing his capital. Gambheer Singh did not have the resources to measure swords with the nominee of the Burmese. He therefore retreated to Cachar on 25 Mera. Fifteen days later, Jai shifted his residence to Kangla But he did not rule for a long time. He was recalled in September 1822.

The Burmese king now appointed Jadu Singh ruler of Manipur. Jadu Singh arrived from Burma with 5 horses, 2 elephants, 50 muskets, 50 spears and 1,000 troops, all given by the Burmese king He also gave Jadu a sword with a gilded hilt studded with pearls, 2 swords with silver hilts, 3 gilded umbrellas and 2 gilded chairs. Jadu entered the Manipur Palace on Thursday the full moon of Hiyangei (November) 1822.

Jadu tried to bring down the price of paddy. He procured paddy from hill areas and distributed it to the needy, the weak and the sick. Paddy now sold at 4,000 *sel* coins a *sangbai*, a substantial reduction. The Valley was overgrown with trees, bamboos and grass jungles. At Nungjeng (a small pond at the central place of modern Assam Rifles cantonment) a tiger was caught on 23 Thawan (about August) 1823. In the

same year, Jadu died on the new moon of Mera (roughly October). He was succeeded by his son Raghab Singh.

During Raghab Singh's time there was a smallpox epidemic in November 1823 The Burmese now attempted to overrun the Surma Valley A Burmese general, Pakhep, came to Manipur en route to Cachar. He with Raghab Singh went to invade Cachar but they had to fall back to Manipur in Phairen 1824 (about February). 3,000 Burmese troops died in the fruitless invasion. The Burmese general returned to his country.

In December 1824, two Burmese generals arrived in Manipur to invade Cachar. They left the Manipur capital on 3 Poinu But 20 days later they returned. 4,000 Burmese died in the war that was going on in Cachar. About 9 days later, Raghab Singh was recalled. He went to Burma with the two Burmese generals on 2 Wakching i. e. about the beginning of 1825. The chief of Kale remained at the capital with 500 Burmese troops to administer Manipur. By the beginning of April 1825, he was relieved by the chief of Samjok as the administrator of Manipur

The Manipuri brothers in Cachar

When Marjit fled from Manipur, he took with him the sacred image of Govindajee Chaurajit already in Cachar received him with open arms The two brothers were reconciled for the time being Then the three Manipuri brothers—Chaurajit, Marjit and Gambheer Singh ousted the rightful king Govinda Chandra and divided the kingdom among themselves Unable to bear the endless trouble from the Manipuri brothers, Govinda Chandra applied to the East India Company in 1820 to kindly annex Cachar. But even to this, the British shook their head because of their policy of non interference.

After dividing Cachar among themselves, the Manipuri brothers could not pull on together. Soon Chaurajit was dispossessed and he took shelter in Sylhet. Marjit was left

with a small portion in the south-west viz. Hailakandi. Gambheer Singh now held the remaining parts of Cachar.

Burma at this time

This was the time when the Burmese attained the zenith of their power. They had overrun Manipur and Assam and were knocking at the door of British India.

King Bagyi-daw, who was rather darkskinned and small and slender in physique, was indolent. He spent most of his time in amusements. His principal queen obtained a complete mastery over him. She filled all important posts with her men. There was a flourishing trade in corruption in the country. Nothing could be done without giving bribes and there was nothing that could not be done by giving bribes. When a country reaches that stage, its downfall is not far behind.

Inspite of a long coastline, the Burmese had little outside contact. The only peoples they had relations with were their near neighbours like the Manipuris, the Chinese and the Siamese. In the estimation of the Burmese of this time the court of Ava was the centre of the world. They honestly believed that the English were a luxurious, effeminate people incapable of bearing the fatigue of war. More important than the English were the Indians. But, if the Manipuris were specimens of Indians, there was no room for worry. For, were not the Manipuris defeated by the Burmese ? China might be a big country; but did not the Chinese sue for peace in the reign of Hsinbyushin ?. From this type of reasoning, the Burmese fully convinced themselves that they were invincible.

Bandula, who conquered Manipur and Assam, reported to the Burmese king that he could easily conquer Bengal without taking even a single Burmese by simply recruiting foreigners. He compared the Burmese to lions and the English to jackals. The King and his nobles believed that in any fight between the Burmese and the English, the Burmese were sure to win.

If this was the trend of thought at the court, the commoners were still more confident. They sincerely believed that the Burmese army could easily march to England. The Burmese were so confident of victory in the impending war with the English that they forged fetters in advance to bring the Governor General of India in

The English roused to action

The early policy of the English on the Eastern Frontier was weak. They allowed Assam to be occupied by the Burmese. Govinda Chandra's petitions for help also went in vain. Failing to get help from the English against the Manipuri brothers, Govinda Chandra now applied to the Burmese for help. The Burmese were eager to oblige Three Burmese armies from Jaintia, Assam and Manipur converged on Cachar about January 1824 According to the Royal Chronicle, the Burmese army under Pakhep left the Manipur capital with Raghab, the ruler, on Tuesday 12 Wakching (about January) 1824. From Cachar, it was easy to invade the British district of Sylhet. British subjects there became panicky

The imminent danger to British subjects roused the English to action. They now abandoned the policy of non-interference and decided to make Cachar a protected state Gambheer Singh, who held the whole of Cachar except Hailakandi, refused to come to specific terms with the East India Company[4]. Besides his authority to transfer Cachar to British protection was doubtful. So the English made Govinda Chandra the protected prince of Cachar and informed the Burmese accordingly At the time of the announcement however, the negotiation was not yet finalised The announcement had little effect on the Burmese Lord Amherst the Governor General of British India, declared war on Burma on 5 March 1824.

Gambheer Singh distinguished himself

Even before the declaration of the war, there were clashes between the British and Burmese forces. Before the beginning

4. A C. Banerjee : EFBI *p* 290.

of the Battle of Jatrapur, the Burmese commander said that their chief object was to capture Chaurajit, Marjit and Gambheer Singh.[5] After the declaration of the war, the Burmese sustained heavy casualties. We have already seen that the Burmese general fled from Cachar to Manipur in February 1824 leaving behind 3,000 Burmese soldiers dead in Cachar.

It took sometime to clear Cachar of the Burmese. One significant fact emerged as the result of the battles with the Burmese: Gambheer Singh distinguished himself. In the Battle of Tilain, he was of great help to British officers. By February 1824, the British came to know of him as 'a bold aspiring soldier' and held the view that he might be able to liberate Manipur with British help[6]. They also believed that he might prove a useful ally.[7] David Scott therefore requested him to liberate Manipur[8]. By April 1824, Gambheer Singh was given to understand that he would be the king of Manipur, if he could liberate it from the Burmese.

The British sent Chourajit to Nadia (West Bengal) on a pension of Rs. 100/- per month. It was not safe for Marjit to remain in Cachar after the outbreak of war between the Burmese and the British. He therefore settled in Sylhet where he spent the rest of his life. The way was now clear for Gambheer Singh to become the king of Manipur if he could drive out the Burmese from there.

British attempt fruitless

The British plan was to attack Burma from Arakan and the delta of the Irrawady. There was also a plan of occupying Manipur to protect Cachar and Sylhet more effectively. After driving out the Burmese from the Brahmaputra Valley and Cachar, the British began to implement their plan of occupying Manipur. Brigadier-General Shuldham commanding the Eastern Frontier, made large scale arrangements to march

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5. *op.cit p.* 317. *6 to 8. op. cit p.* 329.

to Manipur. A road was constructed from Badarpur to Banskandi. The supplies were to be carried on camels, bullocks and elephants. 5,000 bullocks were gathered for the purpose. He advanced to Dudpati with artillery and a brigade. Pioneers were constructing a footpath from Banskandi to the banks of the River Jiri—a distance of about 40 miles. An advance party under an English officer and Gambheer Singh provided cover to the pioneers at work. The topography from Banskandi to the Jiri was a series of ascents and descents—wooded hills and swollen rivers intersecting the route at right angles. The slightest shower turned the alluvial soil into plashy mires. Several hundred bullocks, a large number of camels and some elephants died in carrying supplies to the pioneers and the advance party. Shuldham took about a month to move his force from Dudpati to Banskandi. After examining the footpath to the Jiri, he pronounced that supplies could not be carried on camels, bullocks, elephants or even men. He concluded that it would be impossible to penetrate to Ava via Manipur. The task was condemned as hopeless. The force was disbanded and the headquarters were removed to Dacca.[10]

Liberation of Manipur

After the British gave up the plan as hopeless, Gambheer Singh offered to liberate Manipur with his Manipur Levy. It consisted of only 500 Manipuris. But they were Manipuris. The British gladly accepted the offer. Lieutenant Richard Boileau Pemberton volunteered to accompany Gambheer Singh to Manipur to get accurate information on the passes into Manipur, its resources and the strength of the Burmese.

The Manipur Levy, armed by the British, left Sylhet on 17 May 1825 under Gambheer Singh and reached Banskandi on 23 May. The difficulties of General Shuldham and his large force did not occur to the light Manipur Levy. It advanced through

10. AAR *pp. 546-547.*

constant rain and suffered privation but did not show the least sign of dissatisfaction because they were burning to avenge the insult to their *vaterland*. On Friday 24 Inga (10 June, according to British records) 1825, Gambheer Singh reached Maklang with Pemberton. The Royal Chronicle does not mention Pemberton by name. It simply says that on such and such date Maharajah Gambheer Singh arrived at Maklang with a *phiringee* (European).

On Saturdy 25 Inga a battle with the Burmese ensued. The Burmese army was routed. The chief of Samjok (the governor appointed by the Burmese king), a Burmese general and 22 privates were caught alive. The rule of Bhadra Singh, who had been the ruler for 2 months, ended. The Royal Chronicle gives the length of his rule as one year on technical grounds. But 2 months is the accurate figure.

The main defect of the Manipuri army since the times of Gour Shyam and Bhagya Chandra was the inadequacy of firearms in a changing world. With a sprinkling of firearms captured from the Burmese, Hera Chandra and Yumjao Taba could tackle 2,000 Burmese troops with about 800 guerrillas. But now every Manipuri soldier was armed with a good musket and sufficient ammunition. Therefore it was now the turn of the Burmese to flee. This is the secret of the liberation of Manipur which sounds like a miracle.

The battle of 25 Inga produced a good effect. The Burmese occupation army at the Manipur capital fled without a fight. On Sunday 26 Inga 1825 (12 June according to British records) Gambheer Singh occupied the capital. He became the king at the age of 39.

After consolidating his position in the Valley, Gambheer Singh left for Sylhet with Pemberton about 29 June leaving Nara Singh who was the Senapati (commander-in-chief). 300 foot and 20 horse, all armed with muskets, and 700 Manipuris armed in their own way were left with him.

When Gambheer Singh and Pemberton reached Sylhet, the British officers there were pleasantly surprised to learn that a few hundred 'undisciplined mountaineers' had achieved what General Shuldham's regular force could not venture to undertake. Pemberton reported that the success was mainly due to Gambheer Singh's 'energy, perseverance and skill'.

Gambheer Singh got an additional aid of 1,500 muskets. He raised the requisite number of men. On Friday 13 Hiyangei (18 December according to British records), he arrived in the Manipur capital with his force and Captain Grant. The king hosted a lunch to all the troops, referred to as Victoria Paltan in the Royal Chronicle.

Liberation of the Kabaw Valley

The king went to Thoubal on 14 Hiyangei. Six days later, Nara Singh, Senapati, went to fight the Burmese in the Kabaw Valley. On Friday the 5th Poinu, the king left for the Kabaw Valley. Severe fighting broke out with the Burmese at Tamu on the 14th Poinu. After 5 days' fighting the Manipuris laid siege to the Burmese troops. But the latter managed to flee away at night.

In the battles, the prince of Samjok, the prince of Kale and 28 others were taken prisoner. Some cannon, bullets, quantities of rice, paddy, fish, salt and clothes, some gold and silver, utensils, spades and knives fell into the hands of the Manipuris.

After Tamu, the Manipuris fell on the Samjok capital and sacked it. They got 500 buffaloes and 5 horses. The victorious Manipuris planted a standard on the bank of the Ningthee (called the Chindwin by the Burmese) marking the completion of the liberation of the Kabaw Valley. The Ningthee, it may be recalled, was the eastern boundary of Manipur's dominion.

The above account is from the Royal Chronicle which agrees with British records in essential particulars. According to British records, the strength of Burmese troops at Tamu was 700 and Gambheer Singh reached the Ningthee on 1 February 1826.

Grant reported to his superior officers "The activity, judgment and skill he (Gambheer Singh) has displayed on this occasion has proved the justice of the opinion previously entertained of his merits. The steady gallantry which, without the usual aid of cannon, could force a brave enemy to evacuate a strongly fortified position, is a very satisfactory illustration of the character of his followers".

Campbell's expedition

There was some fighting in Arakan. But the main theatre of the Anglo-Burmese War was in the delta and the valley of the Irrawady. Campbell and his troops going by sea occupied Rangoon unopposed on 11 May 1824. Bandula tried in vain to dislodge the British from Rangoon. After occupying the delta and the Tenasserim coast, Campbell steadily pushed up the Irrawady valley. In January 1825 he found a letter written by Bandula to some Europeans in Rangoon expressing surprise at the attitude of the British who preferred war to surrending the two Manipuri brothers[2]. Bandula might mean Marjit and Gambheer Singh.

On 1 April 1825 Bandula was killed at the Battle of Danabyu (about 60 miles north-east of Rangoon). With this, Burmese resistance began to collapse. Proceeding, Campbell took Prome and went into cantonment for the rainy season. In September, the Burmese asked for armistice. British terms included Burmese non-interference in Manipur, Assam and Cachar. The negotiation failed and fighting was resumed. The British advance was resumed in December 1825.

Campbell occupied Yandabo (45 miles from Ava). There, delegates from the court of Ava tendered Rupees 25 lakhs in gold and silver bullion as the first instalment of the war indemnity of Rupees one crore demanded by the British. The delegates were authorised to accept whatever terms the British dictated. The Treaty of Yandabo was signed on 24 February 1826 ending the Anglo-Burmese War.

2. EFBI *pp. 400-401.*

The Treaty of Yandabo, 1826.

We are concerned with Article 2 only. It reads :

"His Majesty the king of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty states of Cachar and Jyntea. With regard to Manipur, it is stipulated that, should Gambhir Singh desire to return to that country, he shall be recognised by the king of Ava as Rajah thereof."

The Burmese version of the all-important Article 2 is slightly different. It was a little more favourable to Manipur.

End of the Burmese War

With the conclusion of the Treaty of Yandabo on 24 February 1826, the Burmese War officially came to an end. The decks were now cleared for post-war reconstruction.

CHAPTER XX

GAMBHEER SINGH AND CHANDRA KEERTI

After becoming the king of Manipur for the second time on 24 Inga (June) 1825, he cleared the Kabaw Valley of the Burmese. Immediately after it, he shifted the capital to Bishnupur for strategic reasons and administrative convenience. This was on Wednesday the full moon of Wakching (January) 1826.

Food : Immediate necessity

The immediate necessity of the Manipur Valley was food. Nearly the whole Valley was desolate. It was also necessary to consolidate the hill areas. So Gambheer Singh sent two hill expeditions. The first expedition returned with about 16 quintals of paddy and 20 buffaloes. The second expedition also returned with about 16 quintals of paddy. The population was very small as the rehabilitation just started. The small amount of 32 quintals went a long way.

Expiation

Gambheer Singh built his residence on the top of the Bishnupur hill to command a panoramic view of the southern and south-eastern part of the Valley. After this, he made all people of Manipur undergo expiation as the Burmese exercised intermittent sway during the war. Then post-war reconstruction started.

Relation with hill areas

One of the first acts of the king was to invite 3 hill-chiefs of different tribes to the capital. They came, confirmed their allegiance and gave some presents to the king. On his turn the king gave them 3 red blankets, 30 spades and 6 baskets of salt.

The king then consolidated his position in the areas of Ngakacheng, Ukhrul and Choithar. His expedition to the north-east

was very successful. Then he consolidated his position in the area of Thonlang.

With the return of normality, hill chiefs paid their tributes.

Post-war reconstruction : Beginning

By the beginning of February 1827, Gambheer Singh could turn his attention to development programmes. Imphal was still in a state of jungle. So was Kanchipur. Development works were taken up around Bishnupur. The establishment of Oinam Bazar in February 1827 under the orders of the king marked the beginning of reconstruction and the end of Seven years' Devastation. In April of the same year, another bazar was established at Irengbam.

Manipur now began to import bullocks from Cachar to begin agriculture anew. Gambheer Singh distributed such imported bullocks free to his sepoys. Playing of hockey and dancing with traditional gaieties returned.

Shifting of the capital

As normality spread, a more centrally located place was required for the capital. In July 1827 the king visited Kanchipur to examine its suitability. Being satisfied, he shifted the capital to Kanchipur on 10 Mera (October) of the same year. The sacred image of Govindajee was brought from Cachar to Bishnupur in October 1827 . It was brought to Kanchipur in December of the same year giving great satisfaction to the Hindu population.

Condition of Manipur

Even after the shifting of the capital, the condition of most parts of Manipur was miserable. The whole of the Valley was under cultivation before the Burmese War. The population was thick in the Valley. Johnstone estimated the population of Manipur before 1819 at 500 or 1,000 persquare mile'![1] During the Seven Years' Devastation, the Valley was overgrown with dense grass jungle, clumps of bamboo and young trees. Highways,

1. MEMNH.

roads and lanes were obliterated. Rice-fields became shallow swamps. Ruins of once prosperous villages met the eye here and there. With the beginning of the second reign of Gambheer Singh, life began anew in the Valley with a tiny population of 10,000 only.

Condition in the hill areas was a little more satisfactory. The Burmese could not go to the interior hill areas. In the earlier stages of the War, plainsmen took shelter in hill villages. As the trade roads with the Valley were cut off, they were nearly obliterated. As the population was sparse, the hills were thickly wooded. In the circumstances, during the Seven Years' Devastation tigers came down from the hills to the new grass jungles in the Valley.

Immigration of Brahmins

With the establishment of a strong, stable and efficient government at Kanchipur, the kingdom gradually returned to normality. Immigration of Brahmins—a regular feature of the history of Manipur— was resumed. The ancestors of the Manipuri Brahmin families called Anoubam, Brajamayum and Acharya-mayum settled in Manipur in this reign. They came respectively from Agartala (Tripura), Vraja (Uttar Pradesh) and Dacca (Bangla Desh).

Aid to the British

Whenever the British were in difficulty in eastern India, they requested Gambheer Singh for help. In 1829, they were in great difficulty while building a road across the Khasia Hills from Sylhet. The Khasis rebelled. When he received a letter from the British requesting him to help, he wept for joy[2]. He was looking forward to help them for their help in the Burmese War. Gambheer Singh left for Sylhet at the head of a small body of cavalry on Monday 22 Kalen (May) 1829. Mr Scott received him on the bank of the Surma. Gambheer Singh proceeded to the Khasi Hills with the Manipuri cavalry accompanied by British troops, caught the Khasi chief and handed him over to the

2. Khahi Ngamba.

British. The expedition is described in detail in a long narrative poem *Khahi Ngamba* (Conquest of the Khasis).

When the Burmese threatened to invade north-eastern India, the British requested him to make his troops ready to march to Sadiya[3]. When they were in difficulty in the Khasi Hills, some British officers suggested that Manipuris should be stationed there[4]. When the defence of the Sadiya region engaged the attention of the British, Sir Charles Metcalfe, the then Acting Governor General of India, suggested that the region should be handed over to Gambheer Singh if the chiefs of Sadiya and the prince of the proposed State of Upper Assam could not defend it[5].

Rath Yatra in Sylhet

After returning from the Khasi Hills in 1829, Gambheer Singh rested for some time in Sylhet. In that year the Hindu festival of Rath Yatra and the Muslim festival of Muharam fell on the same day. To prevent a clash between the two communities, the British authorities in Sylhet ordered that Muharam should be held first and that Rath Yatra, on the following day. Since Ratha Yatra cannot be postponed, Gambheer Singh told the Hindus of Sylhet to hold Rath Yatra on the day it fell. With the help of the Manipuri contingent, it was held according to schedule.

Development of Tamu

In March 1830, the king proceeded to Tamu to develop it after the Burmese War. After staying there for about 3 weeks, he returned to the capital. It turned out to be the last opportunity for Manipur to develop Tamu. After intimate connection with it for nearly 400 years, Manipur was about to part company with it. The Manipuris did not know it at that time.

Laghu Jyotish Chandrika

Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra introduced a new era called Chandrabda and a new work on Astronomy written in Manipuri

3. NEFB 4. ibid. 5 S. K. Bhuyan : *Anglo-Assamese Relations*. *p. 562*.

entitled *Jyotish Chandrika*. The work was made the basis of the Manipuri calendar. After his death, the famous Sanskrit work on Astronomy, *Bhasvati*, became the basis of the Manipuri calendar because of practical convenience. Gambheer Singh asked Deva Kishore Khumbongmayum, the head of the Royal College of Astrologers, to write a book abridging and improving *Jyotish Chandrika*. The writing of the new book *Laghu Jyotish Chandrika* began on the first day of Shakabda 1752.

The book took a year to write. It was published on the second day of Shaka year 1753 by reading out excerpts from it to a select, large audience in the *mandap* (prayer hall) of Govindajee. The gathering was presided over by the king. It was now made the basis of the Manipuri calendar. The title Chandra Siddhanta was conferred on the author.

Control of wild animals

The Manipur Valley was infested with tigers once more as a legacy of the Seven Years' Devastation. The people now turned their attention to their control. Total annihilation of tigers was not possible at that time. The Royal Chronicle gives the dates and places of killing tigers. Firearms facilitated the work.

In 1831, the king gave 5 muskets and 1 pistol to a Kuki chief. The firearms would help the chief maintain his authority in his area. But the muskets could be used in protecting inhabited villages against wild animals also. The muskets are inadequate ; but they are a straw in the wind.

Elephants were hunted as a source of revenue. But in the midst of pressing works of post-war reconstruction, such hunts could not be organised often. We have only one instance of fruitful hunt. It was in 1830. Thirtyfour elephants were caught.

Image of Jagannath

In 1832 the king engaged some *pandas* (priests) of the temple of Jagannath in Puri to make an image of Jagannath, an image of Balabhadra and an image of Subhadra. They began

the work on Sunday the 20th Kalen and completed it in one month and 10 days. Investiture ceremony of the images was held on the first day of Ingen.

These images were faithfully copied and recopied by Manipuri sculptors. This is why images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra of Manipur and those of Puri look so alike.

Rath Yatra introduced

The Ratha Yatra festival was held on the day following the investiture of the images. This was in 1832. From that year until now, the Ratha Yatra festival is held on a wide scale in Manipur.

It is broadly on the model of Puri with Punar Yatra rounding off the festival. The wheels of the first *raths* or cars were made of the wood of mango.

Building at Vrindaban

Manipur joined the reconstruction of Vrindaban rather late in the day. But inspite of the long distance and the comparatively poor financial condition, Manipur contributed its mite in the reconstruction of Vrindaban and the village (now a small town) of Radha Kunda. The king deputed an official to construct some buildings at Vrindaban. He returned on the last day of Lamda (March) 1831 after completing the assignment

Visit of leading Vaishnavas

A descendant of Advaita Acharya arrived at the capital on Wednesday 28 Lamda (roughly March) 1828. Advaita Acharya and Nityananda actively helped Chaitanya spread his school of Vaishnavism. The descendant of Advaita remained at Kanchipur for 5 days and returned home. The king presented him with Rs 1,000/-, a big sum in those days.

A Vaishnava worthy referred to as Shree Mahashai Thakur in the Royal Chronicle arrived in the capital on Friday 18 Kalen 1828. He was a descendant of Nidhi Ram Acharya, a household

name in the Vaishnavite circle of Manipur. He came again to Manipur in August 1831. This time, Nabakishor Gossain, a descendant of Advaita Acharya, also came with him. In November 1832, a descendant of Nityananda arrived in Kanchipur.

Chaitanya, Nityananda and Advaita Acharya form a trinity in the mind of the Manipuri Hindus. Chaitanya left no descendant. The visit of the descendants of Nityananda and Advaita enlivened Manipur's contact with Bengal and helped the spread of Chaitanya's teachings in this easternmost citadel of Vishnavism.

The Treaty of 1833

The Supreme Government i.e. the government of the portion of India under the East India Company concluded a treaty in 1833. This was the second treaty between the British and the Manipuris. By the Treaty of 1833, the British ceded Jiribam in perpetuity to Manipur. The original Treaty was in Manipuri. An English translation is found in Aitchinson's Treaties, Engagements and Sanads.

It was mainly on the recommendation of Pemberton that the East India Company ceded Jiribam to Manipur. The Court of Directors of the Company severely criticised the Supreme Government for ceding Jiribam. In 1833, the East India Company was still engaged in trade as a lucrative activity. Their main concern was profit. This explains the attitude of the Court of Directors. But the Supreme Government, being on the spot, knew better. By ceding a strip of 'less than useless land' in perpetuity to Manipur, the British would get, whenever they were in difficulty in eastern India, willing help from Manipur. Manipuri help counted much in those days. It was only from 1834 that the East India Company concentrated on governance of British territories in India eschewing trade altogether. The Charter Act of 1833 required them to do so.

The last present from Samjok

The chief of Samjok came to the capital on 4 Inga (about June) 1833 and presented the king with a male elephant (a tusker), a horse and 3 gilded big umbrellas—the insignia of royalty. This was to be the last present from Samjok after nearly 400 years' relation of that principality with Manipur.

Loss of the Kabaw Valley

The British regarded the Kabaw Valley as a part of ancient Manipur and therefore failed to incorporate in the Treaty of Yandabo any provision relating to it. The slip led to the loss of the Kabaw Valley

Soon after the Treaty, troubles arose between Manipur and Burma regarding the Kabaw Valley. As the British were wholly in favour of Manipur, Gambheer Singh allowed them to negotiate on the matter. The Supreme Government of British India appointed Major Grant and Captain Pemberton commissioners to demarcate the boundary between Manipur and Burma. They proceeded from Manipur on Friday 9' Phairen 1828 and met their Burmese counterparts on the bank of the Ningthee. On the plea that the season was far advanced, the Burmese pleaded that the work should be postponed till the next year. The parties signed an engagement to meet again in 1829. But the Burmese commissioners falsely represented that the Ningthee and the Chindwin were two different rivers and that the Ningthee was a river flowing to the west of the Kabaw Valley.

The Burmese sent a wrong map to Calcutta showing the Ningthee and the Chindwin as two different rivers. The Supreme Government sent it to the British Commissioners in Manipur to enquire and report whether any such river shown as the Ningthee in the map existed. In the event of the map being alse, the British commissioners were further instructed to hallenge the Burmese commissioners in the meeting of 1829 o point out the 'large river' called the Ningthee flowing,

according to the map, to the west of the disputed valley. The British commissioners proved to the Supreme Government the trick of the Burmese. Their report was duly forwarded to the Resident at Ava.

The Burmese now attempted to evade the meeting of 1829 on the plea that they were busy with collecting the remaining part of the war indemnity. Under instructions of the Supreme Government, Grant and Pemberton proceeded to the Ningthee none the less and fixed the boundary including in Manipur only the territories re-conquered by Gambheer Singh. The Burmese were invited to meet them in January 1830 mentioning that if they did not come, the boundary would be fixed permanently in their absence.

By November 1829, the Burmese shifted their ground. For the first time, they admitted that Gambheer Singh re-conquered the Kabaw Valley; but began to plead that his occupation of it was not provided in the Treaty. In the meeting of 1830, the Burmese admitted that their map was wrong. The British Commissioners fixed the boundary as in the previous year although the Burmese did not agree. According to the Royal Chronicle, the British officers left the capital for the Ningthee on Friday, 7 Wagching and returned to the capital on Tuesday, 23 Phairen 1830 after fixing the Ningthee as the boundary.

Major Burney who was now the Resident at Ava invited Pemberton to Ava to see for himself the Burmese attitude to this question. At Ava, Pemberton found that no amount of argument would convince the Burmese of the rightfulness of Manipur's claim. However, with his help Major Burney convinced the Burmese of (i) Gambheer Singh's reconquest of the disputed valley (ii) Manipur's possession of it in periods before the War (iii) the fact of the Ningthee and the Chindwin being one and the same river (iv) the fact that at the time of concluding the Treaty, Sir Archibald Campbell neither recognised nor acknowledged the alleged right of the Burmese to the disputed valley.

To convince the Burmese of the above points was no small success. The last point was not the least because the Burmese had made some untrue statements in the immediate past.

At this stage, the Burmese shifted their ground for the second time. They now produced extracts from their chronicle and asserted that at different times they overran and conquered certain portions of the territory on the eastern and western banks of the Ningthee. Overrunning a country at a certain period of time was, according to Burmese notions of those days, tantamount to possession. It must also be borne in mind that the Burmese chronicles were very much biased against Manipur; but it appears that Major Burney took the accounts at the face value.

Pemberton returned to Manipur. Undaunted by the Burmese assertions, he made preparations to meet the Burmese argument by argument from the chronicles of Manipur. He got reliable evidence to prove that upto the reign of Chourajit, the Manipuris were in possession of the Kabaw valley and that they manned the *thanas* (police/army outposts) in different parts of it. But by this time, the British tackled the problem from another angle.

The Burmese were at this time hard pressed for money to pay the remaining balance of the war indemnity. Major Burney hinted to Burmese ministers that the Supreme Government might sacrifice a part of the balance if the Burmese Government agreed to the inclusion of the Kabaw Valley in Manipur. The Burmese ministers listened to the proposal as it was favourable to Burma; but they had no courage to mention it to their king, who regarded the dimunition of his territory even by a square foot as dimunition of his authority and importance.

Major Burney now feared that if the matter was persued further, it would precipitate another war. He now questioned the wisdom of keeping Gambheer Singh in possession of an unhealthy and unpopulated strip of territory which was

divided from Manipur by a range of hills' and thereby thoroughly disgusting the court of Ava and accelerating another war'.

Lord William Bentinck (1828–1835) was the Governor General at this time. He questioned the wisdom of tying the fate of the East India Company with that of Manipur. The Supreme Government was now guided by expediency. The following was their final decision " .. the Supreme Government still adheres to the opinion that the Nmgthee formed the proper boundary between Ava and Manipur; but that in consideration for His Majesty's (the king of Burma's) feelings and wishes and in the spirit of amity and good will subsisting between the countries, the Supreme Government consents to the restoration of the Kubo Valley to Ava, and to the establishment of the boundary at the foot of the Yoomadoung hills".

The Kabaw Valley was accordingly handed over to Burma on 9 January 1834.

Compensation

For the loss of Kabaw Valley, the Supreme Government paid Rs. 6,000/- every year to Manipur. This was under an agreement said to be signed on the 25th January, 1825. It consists of only two articles. The first article says that the Supreme Government agrees to pay Rs 500/- per month to the Rajah of Manipur as a stipend for the loss of territory for the Kabaw Valley. The second article says that if, at any time after the agreement, the said territory reverts to Manipur, payment will be stopped from the date of reversion.

The reversion adumbrated in the second article did not take place during the remaining 113½ years of British Rule in India, inspite of public declarations to that effect on more than one occasion. Therefore, the East India Company paid the compensation regularly every year for so long as the governance of British India was in their hands. In 1858 the Crown assumed direct administration of British India, taking at the same time the responsibility to honour all commitments of

the East India Company. Queen Victoria in her proclamation of 1 November 1858 said "We hereby announce to the native princes of India that all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the East India Company are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part." Suitable provisions were made in the Government of India Act 1858 and the subsequent Government of India Acts to give effect to the assurance in the Queen's Proclamation. The British Government of India therefore continued to pay the compensation to Manipur till the end of the British Raj in August 1947.

The British wished to give adequate compensation to Manipur either in land or in cash. It is unfortunate for Manipur that the idea of giving a suitable land as compensation did not materialise. Rs. 6,000/- was a big amount in eastern India throughout the 19th century. Morever the transfer of the Kabaw Valley was viewed as a temporary measure. The British were carrying all before them in India. It was widely believed that they would before long be masters of the remaining part of Burma also and that they would retransfer the disputed valley to Manipur.

Criticism of Burney's action

It was the desire to avoid another war that prompted Major Burney to recommend transfer of the valley to Burma. The Supreme Government remained convinced of the right of Manipur to the valley but thought it inexpedient to vindicate it. Hence transfer of the valley to Burma and paying compensation to Manipur from the public exchequer of British India. But frictions with Burma did not cease with the transfer. Within 18 years, the Second Burmese War broke out. On the subject Sir James Johnstone observed "As is always the case, though we had carried all before us in the war, we began to display great weakness afterwards. We had an agent, Colonel Burney, at Ava and the Burmese who were not disposed to be at all friendly, constantly tried to impress on him the fact that

all difficulties and disputes would be at an end if we ceded the Kubo valley to them, that territory belonging to our ally Ghumbheer Singh of Manipur. Of course, the proposal should have been rejected with scorn and a severe snub given to the Burmese officials. The advisers of the Government of India, however being generally officers brouht up in the Secretariat and with little practical knowledge of Asiatics, the manly course was not followed. It was not realised that a display of self-confidence and strength is the best diplomacy with people like the Burmese and, with a view to winning their goodwill, we basely consented to deprive our gallant and loyal ally of a part of his territory''.

Lord William Bentinck

Lord William Bentinck was equally responsible for transferring the territory to Burma. So far there is no criticism of his action; because his Minutes are not known to a wide circle. He did not have a single good word for Manipur. It was a coincidence that while he was the Governor General, Major Burney was the Agent at Ava. Burma had become decidedly weaker after the Treaty of Yandabo On the other hand, the British had become much stronger in the intervening period. Burma would not go to war against the British for not transferring the disputed valley. Her defeat at the hands of the British even at the zenith of her power was still fresh in her mind.

By Bentinck's action, the Government of British India was saddled with a perpetual debt ; a dependable, gallant ally, Gambheer Singh, died of a broken heart ; and Burma was indirectly emboldened to attack the British again.

Opening up the Naga Hills

For a direct link with Assam, Gambheer Singh decided to build a road leading to that province via Naga Hills now called Naga Land. The British supported him. In January 1832, Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Pemberton, escorted by 700 Manipuri troops, forced a passage through the Naga Hills to

ascertain whether there was a practicable route to Assam. In the cold season of 1832-1833 again, Gambheer Singh accompanied by the Manipur Levy marched through the Naga Hills to Assam. The Nagas were very much irritated at this. On both the occasions, the Manipuris literally fought every foot of their journey ; but much valuable information was collected in both the expeditions.

The acquaintance between the English and the Nagas practically began from 1832 as an indirect result of Manipur's attempt to have a direct link with Assam Years after Gambheer Singh, a passage was built connecting Manipur with the Brahmaputra Valley via Naga Hills Early in the twentieth century, it became the lifeline of not only Manipur but also Naga Hills.

Coronation

The coronation of Gambheer Singh was held on Monday 24 Inga 1831 (roughly June) 1831. Maharanee Kumudini of Maisnam family was the partner.

End of the reign

Gambheer Singh died after a short illness at Kanchipur on Thursday the last day of Poinu (9 January) in 1834. He was 47.

Gambheer Singh's reign : Assessment

Modernisation of Manipur began in the reign of Gambheer Singh. The Manipuris now got the benefit of the mechanical clock. The beating of *tan* was continued ; but the beating was to be in conformity with the time shown by the mechanical clocks imported from England, which were much more convenient to measure time with. Vaccination against smallpox began. The king's armoury was now called *megajing* meaning magazine. The principal weapons of the Manipuris were now firearms, which they used with advantage against wild animals also. The Manipur Army was now organised on the model of the British Indian Army. Heights of principal peaks and the elevation of principal places in Manipur above the sea-level

were now measured. There was a modest beginning of measuring the annual rainfall and counting the number of rainy days in a year. Hanging was introduced as a mode of execution. But modernisation brought cholera also. Its first epidemic raged in May, June and July 1829 taking a heavy toll of life. Tea was discovered here in 1826.

Rath Yatra was a very welcome addition to the religious festivals of Manipur. It enriched the cultural life and was an important milestone in the progress of Vaisnavism. There was a lively contact with Bengal and Orissa. The whole of Manipur was consolidated after the Burmese War. Dependencies in the Kabaw Valley were lost; but the cession of Jiribam by the East India Company was a very welcome addition to the small area of Manipur.

CHANDRA KEERTI

Chandra Keerti succeeded his father Gambheer Singh on the throne at the age of 2. He was therefore called Ningthem Pishak or Child King. Nara Singh was the regent and looked after the kingdom with the assistance of the nobles. Tarang Khomba, a son of Labanya Chandra, aspired after the throne. He was therefore deported to Cachar.

Rebellion of Tarang Khomba

Tarang Khomba gathered 130 sepoys in Cachar and reached Maklang with them on the first of Sajibhu 1837. Devendra, who was now the Senapati, was sent with 500 sepoys to repel them. In the fight, Tarang Khomba and a brother of his were killed. 100 of his sepoys were captured alive. After trial, one of their leaders was transported and his property was confiscated. Another leader was merely transported. The rank and file were released.

The first census

The first census ever held in Manipur was in Mera (October) 1837. It however covered only the Valley. Data collected also covered only the population. Lairikyengbam Nara Singh was in charge of the census.

Fire in the throne room

A rather unusual event happened in April 1838. Fire broke out in the throne room of the Coronation Hall. The throne and the *yaibung* (a big drum used in ancient and medieval times to summon people in emergencies) were burnt. No cause of the fire is given in the Royal Chronicle ; but we believe it was an act of subversion. Only 6 days later Jugindra Singh, a son of Marjit, rebelled.

End of the Manipur Levy

The Manipur Levy which was raised during the Burmese war to repel the Burmese continued to render yeoman service throughout Gambheer Singh's reign by keeping law and order. The East India Company withdrew their connection with it in 1835. Major Grant the Commandant handed over the charge to the Government of Manipur and left. Even after this the British continued to give ammunition to Manipur as aid.

Political Agency opened

The Government of (British) India decided to keep an Agent in Manipur. Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General, defined the object of opening the Agency as the preservation of a friendly intercourse, and as a medium of communication with the Manipur Government, and as occasion may require, with the Burmese Authorities on that frontier, and more specially to prevent border feuds and disturbances which might lead to hostilities between the Manipuris and the Burmese'. The officer was in the character of a Political Agent. In 1835 Lieutenant Gordon was appointed the first Political Agent at a consolidated salary of Rs. 1,000/- per month. He held the office till his death in 1844.

The Political Agent was to receive instructions and correspond with the Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Political Department. At the request of the Government of Bengal, this arrangement was changed in 1836, and the Political Agent was put under the direct control of the

Government of (British) India. When Assam was constituted into a Chief Commissioner's province in 1874, he was placed under the Chief Commissioner.

In 1861, the Government of British India contemplated to abolish the office ; but on a reconsideration, decided to retain it.

Construction of Cachar Road

Manipur's lifeline at this time was the hill route between the Valley and the Surma Valley via Jirighat. The Treaty of 1833 contemplated the construction of a road along this route and provided that after its completion, Manipur should keep it in repair to enable laden bullocks to pass in the cold and the dry seasons. The construction of the road was begun in 1837 at the joint expense of the Government of British India and the Government of Manipur. The former paid the larger share. Captain Guthrie of the Bengal Engineers, on the side of the British, and Subadar Mareiba Thounaojam on the side of Manipur, superintended the work. The building of the road was completed in Phairen (about February) 1840. Captain Guthrie is referred to as Khatri Sahib in the Royal Chronicle.

The road was too narrow and steep for vehicular traffic but it was good for travelling on foot and for pack-animals.

Introduction of English vegetables

Lieutenant Gordon introduced some English vegetables and fruits. They quickly spread because they were popular. Captain Pemberton writing about this time says that every garden produce of Europe was available in Manipur.

Rebellion of Tribhubanjit

Tribhubanjit and his brother Ram Singh, two sons of Chourajit rebelled. On 13 Kalen (about May) 1841 they reached Maklang. Senapati Devendra went there to repel them. After two battles, the two brothers advanced upto the capital and

then entered the compound of the palace on the 23rd Kalen after midnight. After daybreak, they were defeated. 20 men died in the battle inside the palace compound.

Presents from the Company

On 18 Kalen (about May) 1835, Captain Grant presented the king with a male elephant and 3 female elephants on behalf of the East India Company On 30 Langban (about September) 1839, the British presented the king with 3 hares, 2 pairs of pigeon, 2 partridges, 1 parrot, 5 double-barrelled guns, 1 big circular mirror and 1 big clock. The Royal Chronicle says that the clock was brought from England.

Cholera epidemic

A severe cholera epidemic broke out at the beginning of summer of 1840. About 6,000 people died in the Valley. Probably it did not affect the hill area In the Valley, the death toll was so heavy that it was not possible to cremate all the dead properly.

Vaishnava visitors

In 1839 about November, a descendant of Nityananda arrived in the capital. He left in the beginning of 1840. In the beginning of 1841, he came again. The king donated Rs. 2,000/- to him when he returned home. By the beginning of February 1842, a Gossai (colloquial Manipuri for Goswami) arrived. A month later two more Gossais arrived. In the Royal Chronicle, one of them is referred to as Shri Mahasai Thakur. Since the lineage is not given, we do not know at present who he was. In an entry of this chronicle in the reign of Gambheer Singh, the word is applied to a descendant of Advaita Acharya. In the present case, King Chandra Keerti donated Rs 2,000/- to him. The regent too donated Rs. 2,000/- and a silk cloth decorated with pieces of gold. About a month later, 4 more Gossais arrived.

The visit of the Goswamis deepened Manipur's contact with Nabadwip and helped the spread of Vaishnavism. Contact with Nabadwip facilitated Manipur's contact with Vrindavan and Puri.

Cultural advancement

The first reign of Chandra Keerti saw cultural advancement in a few fields. It saw the beginning of a form of opera. Kaliyadaman, an opera based on Krishna's killing Kaliya narrated on Book X of the Bhagavata, was played at Kanchipur in 1835. *Khubag-ishei*, a form of music in which the singers beat time by clapping, is mentioned for the first time in the Royal Chronicle in 1842. Competitions in *khubag-ishei* were organised and the winners were rewarded. Jhulan, a religious festival towards the end of the rainy season, is mentioned for the first time in the Royal Chronicle in 1840. Interestingly, the water for the fountain was drawn upto the reservoir by means of a pump.

Astronomers of Manipur could forecast eclipses accurately. In the reign, a few instances of their forecasts more correct than those of astronomers of Bengal are recorded.

Operation tigre

There was a systematic drive to rid the Valley of tigers once more. By a similar drive late in the 17th century, tigers were practically extirpated in the Valley. During the Seven Years' Devastation, tigers came down from the hills and the Valley was once more infested with tigers. In different parts of the Valley tigers were killed throughout the reign. As a part of this operation, a stone table was erected on a low mound in 1839. In this operation, the regent killed 26 tigers in a certain single year viz. Shakabda 1761 (1839-40). This fact was inscribed on the stone table erected on the mound.

The mound was named Keibung or Tiger Mound to commemorate the operation tiger. It is on the way from modern Secretariat to modern Manipur University. Imphal was still unoccupied. In the last week of December 1843, the regent caught two tigers at Chinga Hill near modern Manipur College. In April 1840, two tigers were caught in the compound of the old palace (the cantonment of modern Assam Rifles).

International personality

In 1835 some hillmen, subjects of Manipur, committed murder in Burma and returned to Manipur. The chief of Kale lodged a strong protest with the king of Manipur in October and requested him to punish the offenders. The king sent Major Konsaba and Thangjaba Awapuren (Minister For Burmese Affairs) assisted by Grant to punish the offenders. The expedition arrived in the capital towards the end of November after punishing them.

The Burmese authorities did not take the law into their own hands by persuing the offenders into Manipur territory. They lodged a protest and requested the king to punish the offenders, which he did.

In the same year about February, some hillmen subjects of Manipur committed a crime in Cachar, now in British India. On receiving a protest from British authorities, the king sent an expedition and punished the offenders.

Crime and punishment

In 1835 a Muslim woman who was a servant of the Political Agent was tried and punished according to the law of Manipur. In 1836, in a murder case the judges of Cheirap Court (a criminal court roughly equivalent to a Sessions Court) sent a commission for local enquiry. The commission falsely reported that it was a case of mauling by a tiger and not a case of murder. It was however ultimately found to be a case of murder. All the judges of the court and all the members of the commission were dismissed from service and punished with transportation for taking bribe. In 1836, a servant of one Goura Singh murdered a woman of Longjam family. Both the master and the servant were punished with transportation.

In 1839 one Dharma Singh had criminal intimacy with the wife of one Nimai. Dharma Singh was punished. The law was different then. The woman too was punished. She was transported and degraded to a lower caste.

Attempt on the regent's life

The queen mother Kumudini feared whether the regent would ultimately usurp her son's throne. It is believed that she hatched a plot with Nabin, a lineal descendant of Gopal Singh Gareeb Niwaz, to put an end to the regent's life. On Saturday 27 January 1844, after dark Nabin stabbed Nara Singh on the right arm while he was prostrating before the image of Vrindavan Chandra (Krishna) after hearing the *Bhagavata* Within minutes, the assailant was apprehended and, surprisingly, put to death immediately by the regent's bodyguard.

The queen mother fled to Cachar with her twelve-year-old boy king. The regent by his letter dated the 28th January informed the Political Agent, Captain Gordon, of the incident and advised him to be on his guard. The letter was in Manipuri.

Dr. Robert Brown, who was the Political Agent some three decades later, gives a different version also in his *Statistical Account of Manipur*. According to it, Nabin did it on his own initiative because of an old grudge and the queen mother fled with her son to Cachar as she believed that the regent had been killed and that the boy king's life was in immediate danger Had Nabin been produced for trial, we would get a much clearer picture of the whole incident.

Since the throne cannot remain vacant, the king's involuntary flight was rightly construed as abdication. After waiting for 10 days, Nara Singh ascended the throne. The Royal Chronicle says that his ascension was on the request of the people.

Nara Singh's accession to the throne was not quite to the liking of the British[1]. But Manipur was an independent kingdom. So they refrained from interference and allowed the events to pass off[2]

1 and 2 Dr. Brown . *Statistical Account of Manipur* pp.65-66.

CHAPTER XXI

NARA SINGH TO CHANDRA KEERTI

Nara Singh ascended the throne on Thursday the 19th day of Phairen (8 February) 1844 at the age of 52. Before his formal accession, some 7 persons who joined the conspiracy to attack him on the 27th January were transported with their families.

Shifting the capital to Imphal

One of the first acts of Nara Singh as the king was to shift the capital to Imphal This was a move in the right direction. Kanchipur had become too small for the centre of the expanding polity. Imphal was in a state of jungle on account of the long neglect of 25 years since the beginning of Seven Years' Devastation But now the jungle was gradually cleared.

The actual shifting of the capital was on Monday 6 May 1844. The construction of the Cheirap Court, the *mandap* of Govindajee, the magazine and other important buildings were begun. Two masonary lions were built before the coronation hall. Since the Manipuris had not seen lions for about two thousand years, the masonary works had only fancied resemblance to the lion. But the Manipuris meant them to be lions. Their construction was begun on Sunday 2 June 1844. After completion, the king dedicated them to Govindajee on Wednesday 24 July 1844.

The masonary lions were copies of a masonary lion built in the Kanchipur palace either in the time of Gambheer Singh or Chandra Keerti. Nara Singh planted in 1844 a row of *keli*

trees (a kind of *kadam*) from the masonary lions to the main gate. He also planted *Ficus benjamina* (Manipuri *bot*) in 1846 in front of the Coronation Hall. Some of these kinds of trees are still growing.

Coronation

The coronation of the king, Nara Singh, was held on Friday 13 Hiyangei 1844. His queen of Haobam family was his partner.

Immigration of Brahmins

Two Brahmins— one from Barahanagar (West Bengal) near Calcutta and the other from Shantipur (West Bengal)— arrived and settled in Manipur in this reign. The present day Kulin-mayum Manipuri Brahmins are descended from the Brahmin from Barahanagar. The name of the surname Kulin-mayum is from Sanskrit *kulina* meaning 'of high family'. The Brahmin from Shantipur was a Goswami. His descendants are the Manipuri Brahmins having the surname Goswami.

Jalakeli and Kaliya Daman

The festival of Jalakeli held on the full moon of Kalen (roughly May) was revived in 1845 after a long time The opera Kaliya Daman was revived in the same year in November after 10 years.

Presents to the king

In 1845, the Political Agent presented the king with 2 hares. The hare is a rare animal in this part of India. In January 1847, an Englishman arrived from Cachar and presented a cart to the king. In the same year about October, an Englishman presented the king with a cart with a black horse to draw it. The king gave him an elephant. The identity of the last two Englishmen is not yet established. The Royal Chronicle simply refer to them as *phiringee sahib*.

International personality

In 1849 some hillmen of Manipur crossed the boundary, committed a crime in Burma and returned to Manipur. The

Burmese authorities were irritated. This was in the time of Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India (1848-1856). The Political Agent requested the Government of Manipur to write to the Burmese authorities that the offenders were subjects of Manipur and that they would be punished the next winter. The Government of Manipur wrote to the Burmese authorities to that effect. Accordingly, on 3 Wagching 1771 Shakabda (17 December 1849) an expeditionary force of 20 sepoys was sent to Chaigoi, Manipur's police outpost on the Manipur-Burma border, to punish the offenders The Political Agent gave his good offices and accompanied the force. After successfully completing the work, the expedition arrived in the capital on 24 Wagching 1771 Shakabda i.e 7 January 1850.

This was the time of growing enstrangement between the Burmese and the British. Bentinck's policy of appeasing the Burmese had failed to work. The existence of a strong Manipur between Burma and British territories in India was still considered desirable in the time of Dalhousie also. But there was no treaty to enable the British to protect Manipur overtly. So the British sold cartridges and spare parts of muskets to Manipur to strengthen the Manipur Army Manipur paid for these equipments in hard cash. At the same time Dalhousie attempted to keep Manipur within the British sphere of influence.

Contact with Bengal, Vrindavan and Puri

In 1846 two descendants of Nityananda visited Manipur. They returned home by the beginning of 1847. They again came in Inga (about June) 1848. The Royal Chronicle also records the frequent arrival of Goswamis of lesser hierchy.

In 1844 three residents of Vraja (*vrajabasi*) visited Manipur. In April 1848 another inhabitant of Vraja arrived. In the same year three inhabitants of Vraja visited Manipur.

In April 1847 the king sent one Ratan Mani to visit Puri (Orissa). After visiting Puri, the man arrived in the capital in August. The outward and the return journey took a little less than 5 months.

Uncommon visitors

In March 1847 an ascetic who always kept one arm raised (Sanskrit *urdhwabahu*) arrived in Manipur. He was a wandering pilgrim visiting holy places in different parts of India. After he remained in Manipur for about 3 months, the king requested him to conclude his vow and keep his arm normally, which he agreed. A religious feast was held at the temple of Govindajee to which he was invited He lowered his arm after 15 years.

By the end of April 1845, two Brahmins of Benaras came from Burma to the capital *en route* to Benaras.

Visit of Indu Prabha

Indu Prabha, daughter of Madhu Chandra, came from Cachar and arrived in the capital on Wednesday 22 Phairen (about February) 1849 to visit her parental home. She was married to King Krishna Chandra of Cachar. She came with her son. Nara Singh received them warmly.

On 11 Lamda (about March), the prince of Cachar was invested with the sacred thread and 2 days later, he received *diksha* (initiation to religion) from the king. In the Manipuri society, one is initiated to Vaisnavism either by a Brahmin or a member of the royal class called *rajaputra* in Sanskrit. The monarch gave the prince a gold necklace, a pair of gold bangles, a shirt, a printed silk dhoti, a chadar which could be used only by the royal class and other clothes for a complete dress.

About a month later, Indu Prabha broadcast coins at the Royal Market as her farewell gift to the women of Manipur. On 13 Sajibhu 1849 she left for her home. At the time of her departure, the king gave her horses, elephants, cows, buffaloes and other items of a complete dowry befitting a princess.

Condition of Manipur

In the reign of Nara Singh, trees grew profusely in most parts of the Valley. Some parts were covered with grass jungle and reeds. Lakes were still numerous. The re-occupation

of Imphal from 6 May 1844 required some determination; because the inhabitants had to tame wild Nature—wild because of abandonment for 25 years. Two deer were caught in the palace compound in Phairen (roughly February) 1845. In the same year in September, a python was caught in the palace moat near what is now Head Post Office. A rare kind of deer, *Cervus eldi* (Manipuri *sangai*), was caught in the palace compound in April 1847. All these show that the palace compound was surrounded by areas covered with groves, thickets, reeds and clumps of bamboos.

Fortunately no one was killed by tigers in Imphal. But tigers mauled two cows at night in August 1847 near the palace compound and a tiger was caught at Sagolband in November the same year.

In Nara Singh's reign, very nearly 76 tigers were killed in the Valley. On an average, a tiger was killed every month in the Valley. On the other hand, on an average, two people were killed by tigers every year. All these show that woods and grass jungles were numerous. A hog deer, *Axis porcinus* (Manipuri *kharsa*) common in South-east Asia and the Phillipines but very rare in Manipur, was found lying dead in a forest at the eastern extremity of the Valley in August 1847.

Figures of snake-bite are not available. But the cobra (Manipuri *kharou;* Prakrit *gokhurua*) was very common.

Crime and punishment

In 1847 one Maichou purchased a boat from one Kriti on credit. When the latter pressed for payment, Maichou and his son, assisted by two slaves, bound the vendor hand and foot and threw him into a small river, the Nambul, at Pukhramba Thingen about 9 miles south of Imphal. A man going by boat to fetch paddy chanced on Kriti in that condition. He was alive.

In the trial Maichou confessed. He was punished with transportation and the two slaves, with imprisonment. What happened to Maichou's son is not recorded.

In 1845 a man of Urungburen family was accused of attempt to wage war against the king. But he was found to be of very slender means. It was very doubtful whether such a man would ever attempt to rise in rebellion, which required much expense. The king orerded his release.

In January 1846, some traders attempted to smuggle out 25 buffaloes. To avoid export duty they followed a devious route. Officers on duty foiled the attempt. The buffaloes were seized. But the traders escaped.

Again in January 1846 a watch-maker of Leimapokpam family was stabbed by his servant. The servant was punished with imprisonment and put in chains.

At the beginning of 1847, a hillman caught hold of a hill-woman, a woodcutter, and asked her to marry him. She refused. The man speared her not to kill but to coerce. The man was imprisoned and put in chains. In the same year in December, the police at Andro arrested a hillman for lifting cattle. But Cheirap Court found that there was no sufficient evidence. The man was acquitted.

In August 1846 Raghaba, a Brahmin, assisted by a man of Mutum family beat another Brahmin up. Raghaba was transported. So was his accomplice. This case shows the wind of change. Modern times had arrived Had the case been before the Burmese War, Raghaba would simply be banished from the kingdom. But now the person of a Brahmin was no longer inviolable. A Brahmin could now be punished but somewhat lightly.

Rebellion

Melei Khomba and two others rebelled in February 1850. After some encounters they were defeated. Melei Khomba was apprehended. The other two fled but were hunted out and shot. Melei Khomba was executed in a peculiar way. He was sewn up in a bag and thrown into the Nambul River at a place about 3½ miles south of Imphal. The place came to be called Ningthemacha Karong.

Cholera epidemic

The Manipuris of those days drank unboiled water from ponds (Manipuri *pukhari*; Sanskrit *pushkara/pushkarini*) and rivers. In 1849 the monsoon was poor— a rare phenomenon in this part of India. In June and July it did not rain much. In September too, there was much rumbling of clouds but it did not rain. The North-east monsoon being of not much importance in eastern India, there was scarcity of water in the summer of 1850. Therefore a severe epidemic of cholera broke out in the second half of March. A large number of people including personages died.

Forecast of eclipses

As in previous reigns, the court astrologers accurately forecast eclipses. According to the Royal Chronicle astrologers of Bengal forecast that there would be a solar eclipse on Thursday the new moon of Sajibhu 1769 Shakabda* ; but astrologers of Manipur forecast that it would not be visible in Manipur. It was not visible.

In India, the fact of (apparent) rising and setting of the sun at different points of time at different places on Earth according to difference in longitude is well-known since the time of Aryabhatta (late 5th century A.D.) at the latest. His *Aryabhattia*, a Sanskrit work on Algebra, Geometry and Astronomy makes this clear. Aryabhatta even advanced the hypothesis of the Earth rotating round its axis instead of the sun revolving round the Earth and was ridiculed by his contemporaries.

State of the society

In this reign of 6 years, there were 5 cases of suicide. A woman of the palace committed suicide by hanging herself in

* According to author's calculation this date corresponds to 15 April 1847. Whether there was a solar eclipse on that day in other parts of India remains to be verified.

June 1846. A Brahmin girl killed herself by hanging in a temple. The daughter of a small officer committed suicide, also by hanging A married woman committed suicide because she was fed up with her husband. A girl of a respectable family.was abducted by the son of a goldsmith, an attendant of the *yuvaraja* (crown prince). She refused to marry her abductor and committed suicide. A small officer was murdered by his staff.

Was the lot of women hard ? We think so. The *yuvaraja* could spend his time in hunting wild elephants. But was the lot of the small officers, the underdogs, hard ? We think so.

Nara Singh's death

The king died in the small hours of Thursday 11 April 1850 after an illness of one week. He was 58. The Royal Chronicle says that he died on Wednesday the 28th Sajibhu. The Manipuris reckon the day from sunrise to sunrise whereas the English reckon from midnight to midnight. The king died nearly 72 minutes before sunrise. So according to the Manipuri calendar, it was still Wednesday the 28th Sajibhu ; but according to the English calendar, it was already Thursday the 11th April.

In Nara Singh's death Manipur lost a brave soldier, a good administrator and a lover of justice.

Assessment of the reign

The people and the government struggled to remove the last vestiges of the hated Seven Years' Devastation. The move to exterminate tigers in the Valley and the catching of the python near modern Head Post Office may be seen in this light. Attempt was made to boost agricultural produce. The strict ban on the export of neat, transgression of which was punishable with transportation, was intended to further this policy. This was a right step.

The government should have improved the salt-wells and the roads from there to the capital. But they showed only

marginal interest. So the price of salt sky-rocketed. In 1845, twenty muskets were stolen from the king's armoury. Out of this, five were accidentally found by a grasscutter. The rest must have fallen in the hands of pretenders. This shows lapses of the government.

The condition of women cried for attention. Five cases of suicide, all by women, in a short span of 6 years are silently eloquent. Unfortunately, little was done to ameliorate their lot.

On the whole, however, the reign was successful.

DEVENDRA

Nara Singh's brother Devendra succeeded him on 11 April 1850. The cholera epidemic which began in March in the previous reign continued. When it subsided, coronation of the new king and his queen of Thiam family was held in June 1850.

His first act was to stop the beating of gong according to the hours of the clock. A civet was caught at the temple of Govindajee in May 1850. In the same month a hillman was convicted of indecent assault on a married woman of the Valley—an unusual crime, all the more unusual because of its commitment at the market-place.

Rebellion of Chandra Keerti

Chandra Keerti was now about 19. Inspite of the utmost care of the British authorities to prevent him from rising against the king of Manipur, he succeeded in reaching Manipur territory with a force. After initial hesitation, the Government of (British) India recognised Nara Singh as the king of Manipur in September 1844. Recognition of Devendra too was in the offing.

Only 4 days after the coronation of Devendra, the news of Chandra Keerti's rebellion reached Imphal. There was an encounter between his force and the king's force near

Bishnupur on the 3rd July. A Major of the king's force was killed. Chandra Keerti won his first victory and advanced upto the bank of the Waisel, a rivulet flowing into the Nambul. There he defeated the king's army on the 7th July. On the same day he took Kanchipur.

People now deserted the king and flocked round Chandra Keerti. His father Gambheer Singh's liberation of Manipur remained indelible in their mind. They also remembered how only short 16 years ago he lost his throne for no fault of his own. If we believe British records, sepoys refused to fight against Chandra Keerti. They fired in the air.

After nominal fights for three nights, Chandra Keerti with his victorious army occupied the Palace shortly before daybreak on the 13th July. Devendra fled to Cachar after a reign of 3 months

CHANDRA KEERTI

On 13 July 1850, Chandra Keerti became the king for the second time at the age of 19. He appointed Bhuban Singh, a son of Nara Singh, yuvaraj (crown prince and Angou Singh another son of Nara Singh *senapati* (chief of the army). About 12 days later, they rebelled. Being defeated, they fled to Cachar.

Devendra's rebellion

Devendra reached Silchar on 24 July with 5 sons and 25 attendants[1]. There he gathered a force of some sepoys. After informing the Government of (British) India of his intention to fight with Chandra Keerti[2], he marched towards Imphal with his force. The king's force intercepted them at Nungba on 17 Hiyangei (about November) 1850. The king's force got a decisive victory capturing some muskets. Devendra fled to Cachar again and planned a second rebellion but British authorities removed him to Dacca[3]. He was given an allowance of Rs 70/- per month from the Kabaw Valley compensation[4]. He died in Dacca in 1871[5].

1, 3, 6, 7 From Cachar District Records

Rebellion of Naol Singh

Naol Singh a saintly man[2], a son of Madhu Chandra, had been living in Cachar for some years Once he was arrested by British authorities of Cachar suspecting political activity but was released under orders of the Government of British India[4]. He, assisted by his brother Phairaba and also by Kanhai Singh, rebelled in November 1852.

He advanced upto the village of Laitonjam to the east of Phoijing hill on 12 Hiyangei. There was a pitched battle there with the king's forces. His son Hemabdajit alias Tolchou was killed by cannon fire on 13 Hiyangei. Another son also was killed. Kanhai Singh fled to Cachar. As an act of reconciliation, Naol Singh and Phairaba were brought to the capital and pardoned. A British military officer with 150 British troops helped the king. Naol Singh died on 3 Lamda (April) 1852. His rebellion marks an important watershed.

Relation with the Government of India

Chandra Keerti's early attitude towards the Political Agent and the Government of India was marked by hostility. The British withheld the Kabaw Valley compensation from him for some time. Exasperated, he and his nobles openly declared that if the compensation money was not paid when it was next due, they would occupy the Kabaw Valley. About December 1850, the Government of Manipur supplied arms to a group of Nagas hostile to the British. The Government of India told him that Manipur existed only at the sufferance of the British. Dr Brown reports that after this, Manipur gave up the hostile attitude. But the change of attitude was due to the release of the Kabaw Valley compensation with arrears and the recognition of Chandra Keerti by the Government of India in February 1851.

The recognition was followed by a special guarantee. The Government of (British) India now publicly avowed that they guaranteed the raj to Chandra Keerti and his descendants

2, 4, 5 R. Brown Statistical Account of Manipur pp. 67-68.

and that they were determined to prevent, by force of arms if necessary, any attempt by any rival prince to dislodge him. The Court of Directors approved the guarantee but wanted the Political Agent to guide 'the Rajah' in the administration and to protect, if necessary, his subjects against 'oppression of the Rajah'. The Court of Directors said "The position you have assumed of pledged protection of the Rajah imposes on you, as a necessary consequence, the obligation of attempting to guide him by your advice ; and, if needful, of protecting his subjects against oppression on his part ; otherwise your guarantee of his rule may be the cause of inflicting on them a continuance of reckless tyranny"[8].

The Court of Directors probably had in mind introduction of the thin edge of the wedge of interference in the affairs of Manipur. Regarding the special guarantee given to Chandra Keerti, we find its effect from the rebellion of Naol Singh onwards. The assistance of a British military officer and 150 British troops may be seen in this light. The Government of India actively co-operated with the Government of Manipur in suppressing the rebellions of Maipak in 1859 and 1862 ; of Kanhai Singh, a son of Marjit, in 1864 ; and of Gokul Singh, a son of Devendra, in 1866.

Manipur was an independent kingdom in India and therefore an Asiatic power. British courts regarded Manipur as an Asiatic power in alliance with the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. Any one in British India found guilty of waging war against Manipur was convicted of waging war against an Asiatic power in alliance with the Queen. The convictions of Keipha in 1865 and Kanhai in 1866 are instances in point. The relevant penal provision was section 125 of the Penal Code, which came into force on 1 January 1862. The principle underlying this section is based on international comity of nations and the natural desire of a state to remain friendly with its allies and nations not at war with it.

8. NEFB p.155

Return of the queen mother

The queen mother Kumudini who fled to Cachar in 1844, returned in 1850. She came through the Royal Market, broadcast coins and triumphantly entered the Palace. She was greeted with a salute of 55 guns.

The British fixed the salutes of princes dependent on them and maintained a list of salutes which was then called Table of Salutes. It was strictly followed. The number of salute guns of the king of Bhutan also was fixed by the British. In the case of Manipur, the Manipuris themselves fixed the salutes of their monarchs and consorts of monarchs.

Sepoy Mutiny

The great upheaval called the Sepoy Mutiny which was a great watershed affected Manipur also, though not much. The 34th Native Infantry mutinied at Chittagong in November 1857. They came to Sylhet and Cachar where they were defeated by the combined forces of Sylhet Light Infantry and North Cachar Hills Frontier Police. The mutineers then came towards the frontier of Manipur and Narendrajit Singh, a son of Chourajit, joined them. Here 400 Manipuri troops of the Government of Manipur engaged them. Most of the mutineers were killed or captured. Some escaped into the jungle.

Narendrajit was captured and eventually handed over to the British authorities. In deference to the wishes of Chandra Keerti, his life was spared. He was punished with transportation.

Improvement of roads

Suspension bridges on the rivers on the Cachar Road were of cane at first. The Government of India gave iron ropes and tools for repairing roads as aid. The cane ropes were now replaced by iron ones. A road was constructed from Imphal to Mao under the supervision of Lieutenant Raban Royal Engineer and completed in January 1861.

Economy : export import *

The economy in the time of Chandra Keerti will throw light on the tastes, temparament, outlook and the standard of well-being of the people of Manipur of this period.

A duty was levied on all exports and most imports. Export of some articles was banned. In 1873-74 the main imports were : Betel-nut, American cloth, long cloth, *mal mal*, satin, Swiss cloth, steel, carpet, brass, copper, thread, paper, soap, iron pan, nails, velvet, Shantipur dhoti, Jaipuri chadar, coarse wollen chadar (*ektari*), umbrella, looking-glass, hookah, dyes, spices, lace, buttons, sugar, tamarind, iron dao, axe, knife, padlock, saw, hammer, needles, hooka stand, sandal wood, cards and wooden boxes. Books, bottles, phials, shoes, *namabali* (small chadars on which God's names are printed), brass stamps (Manipuri *chhapa ;* stamps for imprinting God's name or footprints on the body) and conchs were also imported.

There was a specific duty on each of the first twenty items (i. e. from betel-nut to umbrella), the duty varying according to the class of the articles. There was an *ad valorem* duty of one anna per rupee on looking-glass, hooka, hooka-stand, dyes, pepper and other spices, sandalwood, cards, lace, buttons, sugar, tamarind, wooden box, iron dao, axe, knife, padlock, saw, hammer and needles. Books, bottles, phials, shoes, *namabali*, brass stamps and conchs were exempted from import duty.

In 1873-74, the more important exports were ivory, bees-wax, silk, dyed yarn, mosquito-nets, *saloo phaneg* (women's everyday wearing apparel), *higog phaneg* (women's wearing apparel of better quality), bed sheets, Maring *phi* (cloths used by some hill tribes), *lai phi* (clothes for images of gods or for aniconic worship), chadar, *kumlang phurit* (black ready-made shirts), *thouree phi* (rug ?), *lai-yeng* (silk chadar of very superior quality), carpet, *lasing phi* (padded cloth), silk

* Source : *Statistical Account of Manipur* by Dr. R. Brown.

dhoti, silk *phaneg* (women's luxury wearing apparel), buffaloes, ponies and elephants. There was a ban on the export of oxen (in the sense of neat) and clothes exclusively used by the royal class.

In the same year, the rates of export duty were : Ivory Rs 5 per maund ; beeswax Rupees 2 annas 8 per maund ; silk annas 3 per seer ; pony Rupees 20 each ; Manipuri he-buffalo Rs 9 each ; Manipuri she-buffalo Rs 10 each and Burmese buffalo (he or she) Rs 9 each.

In 1868-69, the Government of Manipur received Rupees 1,975 annas 7 and pies 9 as import duty on goods coming via Cachar. Details are : Rs 721 and annas 8 from betel-nut and *pan*, Rs 562 annas 13 from cloth, Rs 203 annas 6 and pies 3 from yarn, Rs 228 annas 7 from brass and other metals, Rs 206 annas 15 pies 9 from hookas and Rs 52 annas 5 and pies 9 from miscellaneous items.

In the same year, the Government of Manipur received Rs 3,533 anna 1 and pies 9 as export duty on goods sent to Cachar and other places beyond it. Details are : Rs 505 annas 14 pies 3 from cloth; Rs 127 annas 3 pies 6 from yarn; Rs 1,500 from Manipuri buffaloes; Rs 500 from Burmese buffaloes; and Rs 900 from Manipuri ponies.

In the same year, the Government of Manipur received Rs 100/- as export duty on silk exported to Burma, Rs 405 annas 2 and pies 6 as license fee for cutting wood, bamboos and cane and Rs 7,000/- as the price of elephants caught in the Jiri forest and exported.

Agricultural and horticultural products

According to *Statistical Account of Manipur*, the chief vegetable products of the Valley in 1873 were : Potatoes of inferior quality, sweet potatoes, *kalindri* (a kind of beans), French beans, *hawai asangbi* (a bean akin to cowpea), egg-fruit, cucumber, pumpkin, onion, chillies, peas (indigenous and English), cabbage, cauliflower, beans, English vegetables

and pulses. According to the same source, the chief vegetable products of the hills of Manipur in the same year were potatoes of small inferior quality, chillies, ginger, sweet potatoes of very superior quality and some other vegetables.

Rice was the most important cereal in the Valley and the hills of Manipur. The latter produced maize, cotton, oil-seeds, tobacco and betel also. Wheat was introduced in the Valley. In 1870, its yield was only 25 maunds. In 1872 it increased to 250 maunds. Its popularity also increased but to find suitable land for its cultivation was considered a problem. It was, as now, grown in the cold season and it thrived splendidly. Poppy was cultivated by the Muslim population but only to a limited extent.

We may supplement the above information from *Statistical Account of Manipur*. The other vegetables produced on a wide scale in this reign include mustard leaf, gourd, sponge gourd (*Luffa aegyptiaca*, Manipuri *sebot*), *Momordica cochinchinensis* (Manipuri *karol*), fruit of *Euryale ferox* (Manipuri *thangjing* Hindi *makhana*), *yendem* (a species of Colocasia), taro and *Oenanthe javanica* (Manipuri *kompreg*).

Sugar cane was produced in sufficient quantities. Pineapple was cultivated extensively. Oranges were small but sweet. Mango, lime, guava, pomegranate, banana, jack-fruit, plum, peach, blackberry and emblic (*Emblica officinalis* Manipuri *hei-gru*) were the more common fruits. Indian crab apple (*Docynia indica* ; Manipuri *hei-tup*) and fruits of *Ficus samicordata* (Manipuri hei-yit) were also common and popular ; but they grew wild and no attempt was made to produce cultivated varieties.

Forest and fisheries

The hills of Manipur were covered with rich forests. Pemberton says "I know no spot in India in which the products of the forest are more varied and magnificent. Forest products were the leading items of export. The most important

fishery from the standpoint of quantity of fish produced was Logtag. At this time, there were 28 varieties of fish in it. Out of this, 18 were common in the rivers of Bengal ; but 8 were not found in them. From the standpoint of the quality of fish, Waithou was the best. Other fisheries like Ikop and Pumlen produced fish abundantly. In those days before insecticides and pesticides, all rivers, streams and man-made canals for boat-way abounded in fish

Industry

Manipur was a prosperous land of prosperous cottage industries. Men and women worked hard and produced much in the congenial atmosphere of the sweet home.

The blacksmith supplied the iron and steel implements of the farmer, the carpenter, the weaver and the household. In earlier ages, he supplied the swords and spears of the warrior but now these were largely replaced by muskets and rifles. He worked in iron and steel brought from other parts of India.

The carpenter supplied the needs of the household and industries ; but an important branch of carpentry was boat-building. The boat was still the chief means of transport The good river-system which covered most parts of the Valley was augmented by canals. The textile industry was exclusively in the hands of women, right from ginning to the weaving of cloth. Elderly women ginned, prepared slivers and spun, often burning midnight oil. Even old women spun to turn an honest penny. Young girls reeled bobbins from hanks. Grown up girls and young women vied with one another in weaving the finest cloths and prided themselves on the workmanship of their handiworks.

A certain class of people reared silkworms and produced cocoon. Women descended from Shan immigrants absorbed in the Manipuri society in the middle ages were experts in spinning silk from cocoon. They sold the yarn in hanks. Some women specialised in weaving silk. The export of silk to

Burma, a traditional home of silk, testifies to the quality of Manipuri silk.

Salt industry, dyeing, working in bronze, mat-making, pottery, goldsmithry, basketry, umbrella-making, paper-making, brick-making, manufacture of jaggery and sugar from sugar-cane were some of the other cottage industries.

Manipur was fortunate in having a number of bountiful salt mines. Her ancient kings developed salt-licks into salt-springs. Medieval kings developed salt-springs into salt-wells. About 19 parts of the brine of Manipur gave, by artificial evaporation, one part of salt weight by weight. In England 30 to 40 parts of sea-water at New Castle gave by solar evaporation one part of salt weight by weight. Thus the brine from the mines of Manipur was nearly twice as bountiful as sea-water available in England, according to Pemberton.

Culinary alkali (Manipuri *khari* ; Sanskrit *kshar*) was manufactured from ashes of pease-straw by lixiviation and evaporation of the lixivium mixed with brine. The alkali was, as now, used in preparing a dish—a must in all feasts and a course sometimes eaten at home.

Dyes were made mostly from the plant kingdom. To take an example, a beautiful deep pink was prepared from *Carthamus tinctorius* (Manipuri *kusum-lei* ; Sanskrit *kusumbha*)—a dye crop once extensively cultivated in Spain, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Russia, Iran and parts of India including Manipur.

The worker in bronze made almost all the utensils and also *karatal, jhal* and *mandira/mandila* (different kinds of cymbals). A durable kind of mat was made of a bog plant but the bulk of mats was made of *Scirpus lacustris* (Manipuri *kauna*) while huge mats for thrashing rice on was made of *Arundo donax* (Manipuri *yengdou*).

Economic well-being

The over-all economic well-being of Manipur was that of an average district of British India of that time. There

was hardly anybody in Manipur lean and thin from under-nourishment. All lakes and rivers were free. Anyone could fish in them or ply boats on them. All pastures were free. Anybody could graze cattle on them. Homesteads were still large. Even those who did not have the time or money to manure, tickled the soil of Manipur with a spade and a dao and she laughed with bountiful crops of vegetable. There were no beggars.

The common man had to be content with cottons and coarser kinds of silk. Woollens were for the rich. Finer silks were mainly for royalty and the nobility. There were few brick buildings. The rich built their houses with wooden pillars and beams and rafters of bamboo while the middle class made theirs with bamboos. All had walls of reeds and split bamboo plastered with mud mixed with straw and then with a mixture of sand and cowdung. The rich washed their walls with a fine, bluish clay. The roofs of the rich and the poor were of thatch grass (Manipuri *ee* ; Sanskrit *ulika*). All houses had mud floor. The houses of the poor were just huts. Reed jungles and grass jungles were free ; but it required a license fee to cut wood, bamboos and cane from the forest. Bamboos were however available plentifully in the homesteads. Everybody had a house to live in.

Everybody, man or woman, had ample opportunities to earn livlihood by honest means. The reservation of the textile industry for women was a wise feature of the polity. It saved the statesmen many a headache.

Rajah or Maharajah ?

On Mcculloch's resignation, Dr Robert Brown became the Political Agent in 1868. Dr Brown found that Chandra Keerti signed as the Maharajah in official communications. The Government of India had not conferred the title of Maharajah on him. The Political Agent remonstrated with the Government of Manipur about the title. The Government

of Manipur just ignored the objection. The Political Agent, by his letter No 43 dated 13 May 1870, reported to the Government of India that for the previous 12 years the Raja of Manipur had been using the title of Maharajah without any right although he was of the rank of Rajah only. The Government of India, by their letter No 1103 dated 28 June 1870, replied "... .. if the Raja has been permitted to employ the designation for the last 12 years without challenge, the Viceroy and the Governor General in Council sees no reason why he should not be allowed to continue its use". The Government of India concluded the letter with these words : "The matter, His Excellency in Council is of opinion, is one of very secondary importance".

Every Manipuri king was a Maharajah whether called so by the British or not. About 4 years later, however, the Government of India issued a circular to their officers that 'the Chief of Manipur should be addressed by the title of Maharajah'.

Jila Durbar

When Lord Northbrook (1872-1876) was appointed Governor General and Viceroy of India, Maharajah Chandra Keerti sent him a letter of congratulation. In August 1874, the Viceroy was visiting Eastern Bengal and Assam. Mr Keatinge, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, telegraphed to the Government of India on 6 July 1874 asking whether he should invite the Maharajah of Manipur to meet the Viceroy. His telegram reads "Viceroy visits Cachar in August shall I invite Maharajah Munneepore meet him". The Government of India telegraphed back on the 8th July "You may invite Munnipore to meet Viceroy". Accordingly the Maharajah was invited.

Major Thangal was sent four days ahead of the king with 500 troops to prepare the way and to make the royal journey comfortable. Prince Kulachandra, Prince Jhalakeerti and Major Sougaijamba Balaram Singh were to accompany

the king. Dr Robert Brown and Leihaothabam Gokul Thakur were to follow two days after the departure of the king. Yuvaraja Surachandra was to carry on the administration during the king's absence.

On the 30th July the king, with a large retinue and an escort of troops and 500 Kuki irregulars, left for Cachar on a pair of two decorated elephants.

At Lakhipur, the king inspected a guard of honour presented by British troops. Proceeding, he reached Silchar 4 days (5 days according to Manipuri mode of reckoning) ahead of the date of the *durbar*.

Neither the Royal Chronicle nor Dr Robert Brown mentions the exact date of the *durbar*. But the 10th August is the most likely date. The king proceeded to Sadar Ghat on a decorated elephant. The Viceroy's yacht, a boat worked by steam, was already there on the Barak. Alighting from the elephant on the bank, he went to the yacht on foot accompanied by Kulachandra on the right, Jhalakeerti on the left, Major Sougaijamba, Major Thangal, Dr Brown and Leihaothabam Gokul Thakur walking in his front and four attendants following him.

In the durbar there was exchange of presents. The king presented the Viceroy with gold. The Viceroy presented the king with a gilded sword, a fan of gold, a knife with a silver handle, a gold necklace, a turban, a number of silk cloths laced with gold and a necklace of pearls.

In the evening the king was given a reception. The Viceroy left the next day. The king rested a few days and the homeward journey began on the 14th August. He and his entourage reached the capital on the 21st August.

The Jila Durbar was during the full fury of the monsoon. In the outward journey, Leishang Jatra with considerable risk to his life braved the turbulent current of the Gwai (the Barak) in high spate and repaired the main rope of the suspension bridge over it. Maibiya Tamra Singh, running

faster than the *dak* runner and riding a horse in a part of the journey, returned to Manipur from Cachar to take Govindajee's *nirmalya* (flowers and *Ocimum sanctum* leaves offered to God) and presented it to the king before the durbar was held. The king needed it to get inner strength.

Manipur got the long-term benefit of the Jila Durbar after 17 years. Lord Northbrook was a liberal statesman descended from a noble family. It was a golden opportunity to meet him. The immediate benefit was to enlarge the mental horizon of all those who went to Silchar.

The nature of Jila Durbar

The Durbar was just a formal meeting between the Viceroy and the king of Manipur. They got an opportunity to know each other personally. No business of state was transacted. Manipur was, as now, a part of India. But from the stand-point of the then Government of India, it was a completely foreign state. The Durbar was a meeting of the head of this state and the Viceroy.

Bengal Famine

A great famine ravaged Bengal about this time. Many Maharajahs and Nawabs contributed what they could to the relief fund. The Maharajah of Patiala contributed Rs 10,000/- ; the Maharajah of Travancore, Rs 1,000/- ; the Maharajah of Manipur, Rs 800/- and the Nawab of Rampur, Rs 2,000/-. There were contributions from Maharajahs as low as Rs 300/-.

In the dire need of a part of India—Bengal—Maharajahs and Chiefs from all over India sent help to mitigate the sufferings of their fellow-countrymen. So Travancore from extreme south, Manipur from extreme east and Patiala from almost extreme north-west sent their humble contributions. In the midst of political divisions, the fundamental unity of India manifested itself.

Education

An English school was established about 1837. Johnstone says that fifty or sixty students including two girls attended

it. But it had to close. Another school was established in 1872 at the instance of the Political Agent Major General W.F. Nuthall. The Government of Bengal presented books and maps worth about Rs. 500/-. But it too had to close for want of encouragement. Sir James Johnstone established an English school in 1885 with the approval of Chandra Keerti. After Johnstone's death, it was upgraded by stages. It is now Johnstone Higher Secondary School.

Immigration of Brahmins

The ancestors of Radhakunda Basimayum and Adhikarimayum Anoubam settled in Manipur in this reign. They came respectively from Radhakunda and Rai Bareilly (both in Uttar Pradesh).

Arrival of Kukis

About 2,000 Kukis migrated to Manipur from the south in 1877-78 being probably driven northwards by more powerful tribes, They brought with them a large number of muskets and some ammunition. The king settled them near Moirang. Later, some of them served as irregulars in the Manipur Army and helped in the maintenance of law and order.

Diseases

The most dreaded diseases were cholera and smallpox. Before Gambheer Singh, smallpox was the more serious of the two. From his reign, it began to subside on account of vaccination and cholera became the greatest killer. There was severe cholera epidemic in 1866 lasting 4 months from May, 1876 lasting 5 months and 1882 in October. There was smallpox epidemic in 1851 and 1863. The smallpox vaccine sometimes turned inert during the long transit of those days from Calcutta to Manipur. Hence occasional smallpox inspite of vaccination. In 1868, the Government of India took a decision to promote success of vaccination in Manipur.

There was an influenza epidemic in July 1870. It affected Langjing (a village about 4 miles to the west of Imphal) and

Changang-gei (a village about 4 miles to the south-west of Imphal) more severely.

The Great Earthquake

The Great Earthquake began on Sunday 10 January 1869 about 1 hour 12 minutes before sunset. It is probably the worst earthquake in this part of the world in historical times. A two-storied brick building of the king tumbled down killing a Brahmin, a maiden and a slave girl. Two gates and most of the brick walls of the Palace Compound tumbled down. The bed of the River Imphal near the Palace subsided by about 3 feet. The playground in the Palace Compound rent open over a length of about 20 feet. Sand and dirty water shot into the air in jets through the fissure and parts of the courses of the Singda, the Luwangli and the old channel of the River Imphal. A part of Govindajee's temple collapsed and the sacred image was slightly damaged on the arm. Many houses in the Valley tumbled down.

There were 15 earthquakes on the night of the 10th-11th January. On the 11th January, there were 3 more earthquakes at night. On the 12th, there was constant earthquake for about 3 hours. The banks of the Imphal, the Thoubal and the Irin toppled over and dammed up the water. The brick bridge at Khwairamban and many brick temples in the capital now tumbled down Public roads in the capital cracked. People spent two or three days in the court yard.

Was the epicentre somewhere near the capital ? The farther from the capital the lesser was the damage. The intensity in the Richter scale is anybody's guess. Charles Francis Richter (1900–1985) who devised the scale in 1935 was not yet born.

The spread of polo

The Manipuri game of polo spread to the adjoining British district of Cachar and then to Calcutta which was then considered the second city of the British Empire. From there it spread to London. From England it spread to America and became a game of world-wide popularity.

Manipur sent teams to play exhibition polo matches in British India. Among them were the two teams sent by the Government of Manipur to Calcutta in 1775 to play before the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) during his visit.

Polo was played in Persia in some form very early. But it was left to Manipur in India to frame rules of the game in the reign of Khagemba (1597-1652) and play it as a modern game. The British learnt 'hockey on horseback' from the Manipuris in Chandra Keerti's reign. It is through the British that polo spread from Manipur to all parts of the globe. This was easy ; because at that time Britannia ruled the waves and in her empire the sun never set.

Sir James Johnstone, an eye-witness of the Manipuris playing polo, says that the world's finest games of polo were played in Manipur.

Help to the British

The British had some trouble in the Lushai Hills in 1872. Manipur sent a contingent. The Political Agent also went. When the expedition was over, all the arms lent to the Manipuris for the expedition were given to Manipur in 1875 as free gifts. In 1879 Mr Damant, a British officer, was killed in the Naga Hills. The Angamis besieged Kohima. Johnstone applied to Manipur for help. The king sent 2,000 Manipuri troops to aid Johnstone. The siege was lifted In 1885 in the Third Burmese War, Manipur sent 900 troops under Major Sougaijamba who was also the Minister For Burmese Affairs. Later, 1, 500 Manipuri troops more were sent. Johnstone occupied Kendat. Within 20 days of the declaration of the war, Burma fell.

Chandra Keerti's death

The king died in the small hours of Friday 20 May 1886. Manipur had a Political Agent in Calcutta. He informed the Government of India accordingly.

Assessment of the reign

Manipur was an absolute monarchy as before The realm now fully recovered from the after-effects of the Seven Years' Devastation and made much headway in almost all fields. Nata Rasa, a new form of Rasa, was formulated. Durga Puja and iconic worship of Devi on Vaishnavite lines were introduced in 1851. The reign saw efflorescence of Nata Sankirtan and growing popularity of Manohar Sahi *kirtan* and *nagar kirtan* (singing of *kirtan* walking in the streets) In oral literature, the pre-existent story of Khamba and Thoibi was developed. Some new metaphors and similes, some entirely new episodes and some new characters were introduced with phenomenal success.

Trade, commerce, industry and agriculture prospered. Cultivated plants were healthy. Damage to rice-plants by cut-worms and army worms was rare. Even when stem-borers damaged rice plants in the Valley in 1857 and in the western hills in 1859, there was no famine. This shows the vitality of the economy. A large number of tigers was killed in the hills. The long arm of the strong government reached all parts of the Valley and the hills. But escape from the prison even after it was made of brick in 1864 was frequent, although the escapees were speedily caught. The king's order, without trial, in 1879 to execute Nongmaithemba for only a domestic quarrel and the sanguinary suppression of Irengba's very minor rebellion in 1881 tarnish the image of the reign.

Regular postal service linked Manipur with the rest of India. Photography was introduced. Brick bridges began to replace wooden ones. Khwairamban Bridge was completed in 1855, and Sanjenthong in 1868.

Manipur had some relation with Burma. The present of the king of Burma — a saddle covered with gold-leaf—sent to the king of Manipur in 1856 and the latter sending two envoys to the king of Burma in 1857 are instances in point.

CHAPTER XXII

SURA CHANDRA AND KULA CHANDRA

Sura Chandra Singh succeeded his father on 20 May 1886 at the age of 34. He appointed his brother Kula Chandra Yuvarajah. On Jhala Keerti's death about a fortnight later, he appointed his brother Tikendrajit, who was then Katwal (head of the police) Senapati (chief of the army).

On the day of Sura Chandra's accession, Prince Bora Chaoba, a son of Nara Singh, rebelled. He fled to Cachar. There he gathered a force and advanced upto Iroisemba (about 4 miles to the west of the capital), where he was defeated by the king's force. The British helped the king's force He was extradited to British India.

Coins were struck in Sura Chandra's name with effect from 3 November 1886. A big *mela* (fair) of hillmen was held in the capital in February 1887 Telegraph-lines connecting Manipur with the rest of India were established in March 1887. A big *nagar kirtan* was held in February 1888 with 1,000 torches and 1,000 flags.

Coronation

King Sura Chandra was crowned in June 1887 amidst the boom of 50 salute guns. Maharanee Premamayee of Ngangbam family was his partner. It was a happy occasion. All the royal brothers and Major Sougaijamba Bala Ram Singh were solidly behind the king.

Rebellions

Wangkheirakpa, a great grandson of Labanya Chandra, rebelled in September 1887 during Pitri Paksha (a fortnight sacred to the manes). He advanced upto the centre of the Palace Compound but had to retreat. He fell in battle the next day near Maharanee Bridge.

Jugindra Singh rebelled from Cachar 17 days later. The British helped to put down the rebellion He fell in battle when British troops engaged him. His helpers were extradited to British India.

Scarcity of rice

In the lean months of September and early October 1889, the price of paddy shot up to 900 *sels* (Rs. 2 annas 4) a *sangbai* (a basket of 32 seers of paddy). The government resorted to price-control, fair price markets and free distribution of paddy to the needy. The scarcity was soon over.

The Palace Revolt

The royal brothers who were so united came to be divided into two factions A certain Prince was fond of playing dice. From a wrong way of weaning him from it, differences appeared among the Princes. The differences snow-balled. Matters came to a head when Prince Jila was deprived of a certain small privilege.

At about 2.25 a m. on 22 September 1890, Prince Jila and Angou Sana went near the bed chamber of the king and fired into the windows. The king blundered and fled to the Residency. Once he entered the compound of the Residency, he became a pawn of the British. The Political Agent Mr Grimwood soon disarmed the king and his supporters. This was unexceptionable. But the next moves of the Political Agent cannot be countenanced. When he reported the Palace Revolt to the Chief Commissioner of Assam telegraphically, the latter instructed him to effect a reconciliation among the Princes. He did not listen. The Chief Commissioner then spelt out the policy of the British Government on Manipur and instructed him

to put down the Revolt indicating that necessary force would be sent from Kohima. He did not listen. These were blunders of the Political Agent.

The king was too orthodox. He did not eat, or drink even a drop of water at the Residency lest he would lose his caste. It was not possible, therefore, to remain there for a long time. At dawn General Thangal, Colonel Shamu, the Artillery Major, some ministers, about 600 properly armed troops and about 1,400 men gathered outside the Residency to express solidarity with the king. The Yuvarajah was neutral. The Army by and large remained loyal. Any other man with this position of strength would regain the throne. Besides the Palace Revolt was directed mainly against Prince Pakasana and not the king. Since the king would not act, the assembled men dispersed.

On the 23rd September, the king wrote a letter to Tikendrajit in Manipuri saying that he was going to Vrindaban and asking him to make necessary arrangements as he could not climb hills. Mr Grimwood had only a nodding acquaintance with Manipuri. He thought that it was a deed of abdication, reported to his superiors accordingly, and unwittingly sealed Sura Chandra's fate.

Tikendrajit replied courteously the same day. Addressing his brother as Manipureshwar (king of Manipur), he said that he would do everything to fulfil the *rajajna* (royal command) and asked for forgiveness He concluded his letter saying "This happening is the most improbable of all improbabilities".

The king left the Residency for Calcutta at about 6 p.m. of the 23rd September. The Political Agent gave him a pass in English. He did not know English. As he left without making arrangements for the governance of the realm in his absence, his act was rightly construed as abdication. He never returned.

Assessment of the reign

Sura Chandra was a good man but a weak king. He had no young energetic prime minister. Almost the only works of lasting benefit are digging of 3 ponds at Thangmeiband, killing of tigers and popularisation of *nagar kirtan*. He maintained the independence of Manipur intact and did not allow the British to advance an inch. This is probably why Mr Grimwood refused to render to him the traditional help when he blundered into the Residency. It was also wrong of him to ask the British to do everything for him.

KULA CHANDRA

Kula Chandra ascended the throne on 23 September 1890 at the age of 37. His coronation was held the same day. Tikendrajit was appointed Yuvarajah and Angousana, Senapati. He struck coins in his name on 25 February 1891 and issued 12,000 of them. Census operations began in the first week of February 1891.

Sura Chandra's move

On reaching Silchar, the ex-king learnt the meaning of of the pass given by Mr Grimwood It said that he had abdicated. He immediately telegraphed to the Chief Commissioner repudiating abdication. On reaching Calcutta, he wrote a letter to the Chief Commissioner on 14 November. In it, he called the British 'the paramount power', recounted his part in the Kohima Expedition, the Lushai Expedition and the Third Burmese War, made certain references to Tikendrajit and prayed for his restoration to power.

It is probable that the ex-king was incapable of deep thinking and walking long distances. Mrs Ethel C. Grimwood says that he was apoplectic. Even if the Government of India decided to restore him, Manipur would no longer be independent. The British would now demand payment of an annual tribute.

Decision of the Government of India

The Government of India was at first for restoration of the ex-king while the Chief Commissioner and the Political Agent were for recognition of Kula Chandra as Maharajah Ultimately, the Government of India decided that (1) Tikendrajit should be removed from Manipur (2) Kula Chandra should be recognised as the Maharajah (3) the Chief Commissioner should go to Manipur and announce the decision.

The view of the Government of India was that the Palace Revolt was unlawful and that its authors should be punished. But they ultimately accomodated the view of the Chief Commissioner and the Political Agent The result was the illogical compromise. It acquiesched in the outcome of the Palace Revolt but sought to punish its author

Rose-coloured spectacles

The Chief Commissioner made his own plan to capture Tikendrajit. The Viceroy authorised him to take with him as many troops as he liked. The Chief Commissioner, Mr J.W Quinton, decided to take only 500 troops With this he hoped to capture the Yuvarajah of a kingdom He believed that Kula Chandra would hail the package decision of the Government of India. In 1891, the British were about to reach the zenith of their power and prestige The British Empire covered about 13 million square miles or about ¼ of the land surface of the Earth whereas Manipur, a little larger than Wales, covered a meagre 8,632 square miles Mr Quinton believed that the Manipuris would quietly submit to any decision of the Government of (British) India.

Seeing things through rose-coloured spectacles, Mr Quinton started from Golaghat with 400 troops as 100 troops under Lt P R. Gurdon were already in Manipur for his escort An employee of the Residency telegraphed to him warning him of the danger ahead. He laughed away the telegram.

The 'Durbar' at the Residency

Grimwood went to Karong (30 miles north of the capital) to receive Quinton. There he came to know, for the first time, the decision of the Government of India to capture Tikendrajit. He was disconcerted and said more than once that he would wash his hands of it. Quinton wrote to the king from Sekmai (12 miles north of the capital) that there would be a durbar on the 22nd March at 12 a.m. at the Residency. He reached the capital on the 22nd March and for the first time, spelt out to Grimwood his plan for capturing Tikendrajit. It was to invite the royal brothers to a 'durbar' and arrest him in it.

Accustomed to statecraft for about two thousand years, the Manipuris were now sure by this time that there was want of *bona fides* on the part of the British They inferred this from the large force Quinton brought, the demeanour of British officers, the date of the 'durbar' and its venue.

The king accompanied by Tikendrajit, Angousana and nobles arrived at the gate of the Residency in time. None received them. They were kept waiting in the hot sun. Translation of the decision of the Government of India was going on inside the Residency. The doors of the 'durbar room' were all locked, armed guards were posted in the adjoining rooms and around the Residency. A Muslim photographer, Dasu Sardar, saw what was going on inside the Residency and reported it to Tikendrajit. Inspite of illness Tikendrajit came to the durbar. Now he went away.

When the translation was ready, Quinton refused to see the king without Tikendrajit. The latter was sent for but the messenger returned with the message that he was too ill. The counterfeit durbar was adjourned till 8 a.m. of the following day. Grimwood warned his staff not to breathe the secret.

The next day, no one turned up at the 'durbar'. The elaborate trap was there but the Manipuris had seen through Quinton's plan.

Quinton's next move

As directed by Mr Quinton, Mr Grimwood went to the Palace with Mr Simpson at 4 p m to communicate to the king, the decision of the Government of India. The king duly received them in the Durbar Room. Mr Grimwood communicated the decision but the king expressed his inability to hand over the Yuvarajah without consulting his ministers. Grimwood gave him half an hour. The Durbar to a man decided not to hand over Tikendrajit Grimwood then asked the king to hand over the Yuvarajah or to give him an order in writing to arrest him The king declined both. Grimwood had an interview with Tikendrajit and explained to him as a friend that the removal would not be permanent and that he would be given some allowance during the period of removal. He could not get the Yuvarajah's surrender.

The Manipur War

Mr Quinton now ordered Lt Brackenbury to capture Tikendrajit by force by invading his residence inside the Palace Compound. Capt Butcher and another officer were to help him. At about 3 30 a m. on 24 March 1891 the Manipur War began. British troops treacherously attacked the Palace Compound at three points—the southern gate, the western gate and the Yuvarajah's residence They desecrated and plundered the temple of Vrindaban Chandra. In the initial advantage of the sudden attack, British troops took the southern gate, the western gate, the temple of Vrindaban Chandra and the Yuvarajah's residence.

After dawn, the Manipuris went into offensive. Lt Brackenbury was mortally wounded at about 8 a m., 3 Gurkhas were killed and 14 Gurkhas were wounded. Quinton tried to contact at about noon the Government of India by telegraph but found the lines cut all around Some Manipuri sepoys in a clever move reached the back of the Residency by creeping. They fired direct into the room where Mrs Grimwood was

and lowered the morale of the British troops. At about 4 p.m. the Manipuris shelled the Residency at point blank range from the south-west corner of the Palace Compound. The British now abandoned the southern gate, the western gate and the Yuvarajah's residence complex and concentrated on the defence of the Residency.

Mr Quinton, Mr and Mrs Grimwood, Col Skene and Lt Gurdon took shelter in the cellar. They decided *to get a truce and then end the hostilities* by coming to some terms with the Maharajah[1] At about 8 p m. their bugler sounded the cease-fire. Both sides ceased firing.

Mr Quinton wrote to the king in English "On what condition will you cease firing on us and give me time to communicate with the Viceroy and repair the telegraph ?". There was no one to translate it into Manipuri. After half an hour, a reply in Bengali purporting to be from the king came. It said that (1) he had no wish to fight with the Queen's forces (2) the British attacked the Manipuris first and the Manipuris were defending themselves and (3) he was willing to stop fighting if the British put down their arms. It also said that although at the moment there was no one able to read it the king guessed that the Chief Commissioner wanted to stop fighting. The exact implication of the term to put down arms being not clear, Quinton, Grimwood, Col Skene, Lt Simpson and Mr Cossins with a bugler went to the Palace at about 8.30 p. m. to get an authoritative interpretation from the Yuvarajah.

The parley

Mr Quinton led the British team into the Palace Compound without assuarance of safe conduct from any

1. *My Three Years In Manipur* pp 214-215. Mrs Grimwood was an eye-witness of all that happened at the Residency.

person in authority It was extremely dangerous to go into their enemy's fort at night in that condition after 17 hours' fighting The parley was without the king's knowledge

The parley was held on the road in front of the Durbar Room. A crowd gathered not far away.

Quinton shook hands with Tikendrajit and Thangal The Manipuris inquired after Mrs Grimwood The British team told them that she was safe Although the parties could not come to an agreement on the *custody* of the British arms, they were definitely coming to a rapproachment They agreed to meet again on the following morning and dispersed Grimwood asked Nongmaithem Giridhari, a member of the Manipur Durbar, to see the British team out Giridhari asked Tikendrajit whether he should do so. Tikendrajit said "Certainly".

Unforseen turns

The British team accompanied by Giridhari had gone about 140 feet The Lion Gate was suddenly shut on them and an angry crowd attacked them with sticks, brickbats and butts of rifles Giridhari placed himself between the crowd and the British officers to pitotect them and they returned to the foot of the steps of the Durbar Room Huirem Jatra Singh of Keisamthong and Wangkheirakpa helped Giridhari. A man named Pukhramba Kajao aged about 35 years, a chance visitor from the village of Kangamong, speared Grimwood in an act of impulse He fell down and called for water. Drinking-water was brought to him He drank some and died.

Lt Simpson was injured on the forehead and on the arm Jatra Singh broke open the door of the Durbar Room and the surviving *sahibs* were pushed inside to save them Jatra Singh got chairs for the *sahibs*. Lt Simpson murmured "*Pani pani* (water, water)" Jatra Singh, who spoke Hidustani, gave him water to drink, rubbed out the blood from his brow with water and his turban and tied up his injured arm with his turban made into a sling. Giridhari,

Wangkheirakpa and Jatra Singh guarded the door against further attack. Tikendrajit arrived, chased away the crowd, spoke to Quinton, posted sentries and went away.

A little later an order, said to be Thangal's, came to kill the British officers and the bugler. The order was *ultra vires*. Tikendrajit countermanded it, went and spoke to Thangal and returned to his house to sleep. While he was asleep, the *sahibs* and the bugler were handed over to the public executioners.

Immediate Manipuri reaction

Kajao's act was a bolt from the blue. He came all the way from his village on the 24th March and taking advantage of the cease-fire, entered the Palace Compound by the south gate which had changed hands twice in 12 hours. Hearing that 5 sahibs were coming for a durbar, he joined the crowd near the Lion Gate. He did not know that his victim was the Political Agent It is surprising how a simple man from the country by a single act with his simple, undecorated spear brought about a cataclysm and changed the course of History in eastern India.

After Grimwood's death Thangal said "What use of saving the *sahibs* is there now ? On learning the death of the British officers, the king was a very sad man on the morning of the 25th March. Mrs Grimwood fled with about 650 British troops to Cachar in the small hours of the 25th. To send 650 British troops fleeing in the last decade of the 19th century sounds like legend. But it happened. Shortage of ammunition was the main reason. They had also only small-arms and no guns to return gunfire.

Grant's advance

A Gurkha Jamadar at Kanchipur fled to Tamu and reported the happenings to Lt C.J.W. Grant. On the 28th March he advanced against Manipur with ample ammunition. Overcoming Manipuri resistance at Palel, he advanced upto

Thoubal, where there was hard fighting on the 31st. A bullet from the Manipuris grazed Grant under the arm. Next he fell in the swift current of the River Thoubal neck-deep and had to be helped out. Before the determined fire of 200 Manipuri troops in red jacket, white dhoti and white turban armed with Martinis, Grant had to retreat.

On the 1st April, the Manipuris tried to dislodge Grant's force from Athokpam with artillery fire They inflicted some casualties but could not dislodge them from their trenches. On the 6th April again the Manipuris inflicted some more casualties. On the night of the 8th April Grant retreated, under peremptory orders from his superiors, to Palel.

At Palel, Grant's force was reinforced with 180 men and 11 boxes of ammunition In the fighting there, Grant had another hair-breadth escape from death His horse on which he fought the battle was clean killed but he himself escaped unhurt. After this his force was further reinforced with 400 Gurkhas, 2 mountain guns and 2 British officers—Major Leslie and Cox.

The remaining part of the War

The news of the British debacle reached the Viceroy on the 29th March at Nainital. He returned immediately to Simla. A meeting of the Council was held. British troops were ordered to advance on Manipur from Kohima, Silchar and Tamu Although the orders were issued on the 29th and the 30th March, it took some time to assemble the forces It was during this time that the Battle of Thoubal and the Battle of Athokpam were fought

To resist the advance of the British from the north, 800 troops were sent under (1) Khwairakpa (2) Major Laishram Jambhuban (3) Subadar Maibiya Tamra Singh and (4) Heigrujamba Poila. To resist British advance from Silchar 1,000 troops were sent under (1) Kala Sana, Master of the Horses (2) Sana Ngangba (3) Yengkhoiba Poila and (4) Longjamba

Poila. They encamped on the Laimaton. To resist the advance of the Tamu Column, which was the best equipped of all the British columns, 700 troops were sent under Wangkheirakpa and Major Yengkhoiba. Two days later, 400 troops more were sent under Major Paona and Major Chongthamiya The first batch remained at Thoubal while the two Majors with their troops marched on Palel by the Burma Road. Wangkhei-Meiraba Poila also with 30 troops left Thoubal for Palel via Kakching.

At Kakching, a British detachment of 150 Gurkhas and a part of the Mounted Infantry under Maj Charles Leslie intercepted the small force of Wankhei Meiraba. In the hand-to-hand fighting at Manao Ching at Kakching on the 23rd April, Wangkhei Meiraba fell in battle with 20 of his gallant men.

As the British troops had already occupied Palel, the two Majors encamped at Khongjom. At the bow of a stream called the Khongjom Turen to the west of the Indo-Burma Road, the Manipuris made a fort of mud and dug 6 or 7 trenches to its north-east. The fort was surrounded on three sides by the stream. The trenches were between the Indo-Burma Road and the eastern bank of the stream, which from about the north-eastern corner of the fort flowed to the north.

The Silchar Column proceeded from Silchar on the 5th April ; the Kohima Column, from Kohima on the 20th April An advance party of the Tamu Column occupied Palel on the 18th April. The main body of the Tamu Column proceeded from Tamu on the 23rd April.

The Battle of Khongjom

On the morning of the 24th April, Lt Cox with a team reconnoitred along the Burma Road, noticed the Manipuri fort and reported to his superiors. On the morning of the 25th April, at dawn a party of 50 rifles under Cap Drury and Lt Grant, 50 rifles under Lt C.J.W. Grant and the Mounted Infantry under Lt Cox marched up the road and surrounded

the Manipuris. Gen Graham commanding the Tamu Column with the main body arrived at Palel on the 25th April. He sent a reinforcement of 200 troops and 2 guns of the Royal Artillery under the overall command of Cap Rundall.

Cap Rundall placed his guns on the top of Langathel Hill about 400 ft. above the level of the road. The Manipuri fort was 1,000 yards to the north-west from this position. The British then advanced on foot and horseback. Hand-to-hand fighting followed. Almost all Manipuris were killed. But before they died they shot Lt C.J.W. Grant in the neck, Lt Cox in the shoulder and Cap Carnegy in the thigh. The spirit of the Manipur War was symbolised by the unknown soldier who, when his ammunition was exhausted, gave Cap Drury the benefit of his rifle-butt and broke his hand.

British war-horses who had fought in Western Asia and Africa said that they had never seen or heard of a hand-to-hand fighting as severe as the Battle of Khongjom.

The British won the day. The battle began at peep of day and ended at dusk. With the setting of the sun on the 25th April 1891 the sun of Manipur's sovereignty was setting. The British were now masters of the whole of India barring some places held by the French and the Portuguese. The process begun with the Battle of Plassey in 1857 was complete with the Battle of Khongjom in 1891.

The loss of independence

The royal family fled at about 6 p.m. on the 26th April. Before the king fled he destroyed the surplus ammunition and most of the arms. The Silchar Column was the first to enter the Palace. The three Columns converged on the Palace on the 27th April. Maj Maxwell was appointed the Chief Political Officer to administer Manipur.

CHAPTER XXIII

PARAMOUNCY AND AFTER THAT

After British troops occupied Manipur, the Government of India constituted what they called courts to try Kula Chandra, Tikendrajit, Thangal, Chongthamia and many others. Kula Chandra, Tikendrajit and other Princes were tried by a 'court' and other persons were tried by Maxwell sitting as a 'court'. The sentences passed by Maxwell were subject to confirmation by the General Officer Commanding the Manipur Field Force and the sentences on the Princes were subject to acceptance by the Viceroy in Council. These proceedings of the so called courts were judicial proceedings by non-judicial men without the judicial frame of mind. To safeguard the future of British Rule in India and not administration of justice was the paramount object of the 'courts' and the Viceroy in Council. Kula Chandra, Tikendrajit and Thangal were sentenced to death. Kula Chandra and Tikendrajit appealed to the Viceroy. In their appeal petition, they rightly took the stand that Manipur was a sovereign state (prior to 27 April 1891) and that no subject of Manipur owed allegiance to the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India.

The Viceroy exercising the prerogative of mercy commuted the sentence on Kula Chandra to transportation for life and forfeiture of property. Those on Thangal and Tikendrajit remained intact. The evidence in *Empress Vs Tekendrajit*

read between the lines, reveals that the Prince was not guilty of the second count of the charge. Queen Victoria tried to save Tikendrajit but not Thangal. She however could not save the Prince. The sentences on Tikendrajit and Thangal were carried out on 13 August 1891 in the midst of a massive protest from the people.

A new Rajah

Quinton's handling the situation and his inviting Tikendrajit to a durbar with the intention of arresting him were debated in the British Parliament. In the House of Lords, the debate was on a higher plane. At a time when there were not many people to speak for Manipur, Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy with whom Chandra Keerti had a durbar in Cachar 17 years ago and Lord Ripon, a former Viceroy of India (1880-1884), begged the British Government not to annex Manipur.

The British Government decided not to annex Manipur. The Government of India issued on 21 August a proclamation that although Manipur had become liable to the penalty of annexation, Her Majesty made a regrant of it as an act of mercy. 'Regrant' was a euphemism. Manipur was put on an entirely different footing. It became a tributary State and had now to pay an annual tribute of Rs 50,000 to the British Government. It had also to pay a war indemnity, called fine in those days, of Rs 2¼ lakhs.

The British selected a boy of about 6 years named Churachand, a great grandson of Nara Singh, to be Rajah. The *sanad* dated 18 September 1891 issued by H.M. Durand Secretary to the Government of India reads :

The Governor-General in Council has been pleased to select you, Churachand, son of Chowbi Yaima, to be Chief of the Manipur State ; and you are hereby granted the title of Rajah of Manipur and a salute of eleven guns.

The Chiefship of Manipur State and the title and the salute will be hereditary in your family; and will descend in the direct line by primogeniture, provided that in each case the succession is approved by the Government of India.

An annual tribute, the amount of which will be determined hereafter, will be paid by you and your successors to the British Government.

Further you are informed that the permanance of the grant conveyed by this Sanad will depend on the ready fulfilment by you and your successors of all orders given by the British Government with regard to the administration of your territories, the control of the hill tribes dependent upon Manipur, the composition of the armed forces of the State and any other matters in which the British Government may be pleased to intervene.

Be assured that so long as your House is loyal to the Crown and faithful to the conditions of this Sanad, you and your successors will enjoy the favour and protection of the British Government."

The investiture ceremony was held in April 1892. It was made clear that the right of the new Rajah derived solely from his selection by the Government of India. Maj Maxwell the Political Agent, announced that *lalup* (payment of tax by working for the State) and slavery were abolished. In lieu of *lalup* a land revenue of Rs 5/- per *pari* (1 *pari*=1 hectare) per year and a house-tax were levied. The house-tax was Rs 2 per year in the Valley and Rs 3 per year in the hills During the minority of His Highness, the administration of the State was carried on by the Superintendent of the State. The Political Agent was appointed the Superintendent of the State.

The British were committed to abolish slavery throughout their Empire. It was abolished in British India by Act V of 1843. The British put pressure on the Rulers, by various

means like revision of *sanads*, to abolish slavery in the States dependent on the Crown. As Manipur was outside the British Empire, abolition of slavery in it was not the concern of the British. In the investiture ceremony, the British were taking the earliest opportunity to abolish this harmful institution.

Misery under British Rule

By selecting a boy of 6 years to be the Rajah, the British took an opportunity to keep Manipur under their direct rule from 1891 to 1907. The 16 years of Direct British Rule was a catalogue of floods, famines, scarcity of water and cholera epidemics. The British could not manage the small but troublesome rivers of the Valley. So there were severe floods in 1892, 1893, 1895, 1898, 1901, 1902 and 1905. This means that on an average there was a major flood for every two years.

Floods killed rice plants. If the floods occurred late, replanting rice plants would not yield good crop. In the days when Manipur was independent, famine was a very rare phenomenon. People had plenty of good food to eat. But now in the changed circumstances, famines stalked the land in 1891, 1893, 1896 and 1906—on an average a famine in every four years.

Public ponds became derelict for want of care. In 1898, the Administration reclaimed Ningthem Pukhri, the big pond dug by Gopal Singh Garib Niwaz. In 1899, it dug 4 sizable ponds—one each at Kwakeithel, Sayang, Terakeithel and Lalambung. In 1904, it dug 2 more—one each at Haobam Marak and Sangaibrau. While these measures were laudable, the new ponds were all concentrated in a small strip of Imphal West, neglecting other parts of Imphal, the countryside and the hills. Moreover 6 new ponds were too few. So there were severe water-famines in 1897, 1898 and 1901. In 1898 and 1901, the rainfall was scanty in summer and heavy in

the monsoon. So in these two years, there was water-famine in summer and severe flood in the monsoon.

Water-famines and floods brought water borne diseases. So there was severe cholera epidemic in 1891, 1896 and 1898. In the epidemic of 1898, there were 6,053 deaths. There was epidemic of enteric fever in 1897 and 1901.

Frequent floods, water-famines, epidemics and famines nearly ruined agriculture—the backbone of the economy of the State

The shattered economy produced its inevitable effect on law and order. The famine of 1891 led to much cattle theft Robbery which was extremely rare before 1891 became frequent in 1893 and 1894 in Imphal. There was a daring burglary in Govindajee's temple in January 1895. It stunned the Valley population In 1896, there was a daring burglary in the temple of Sanamahi in the compound of the State Military Police In 1897, there was another daring burglary in the Cheirap Court, the highest criminal court next to the Political Agent's Court and the Assistant Political Agent's Court. These were commentaries on the administration of the Political Agent If this was the condition in the capital, what would be the condition in the country side ?

The Agitation, 1904

The first reaction of the Manipuri people to the establishment of British Rule was actively hostile They showed the hostility by burning many buildings of British officers Such acts were particularly frequent in 1891 and 1892. The Political Agent coped with the situation by constructing buildings of brick roofed with tiles. The Manipuris held demonstrations too He dispersed them with force

Revolutionaries of Imphal held secret meetings at night and made practicable plans to resist British Rule. In March 1904 they burnt the bungalow of the Assistant Political Agent Mr J.J. Dunlop. He shifted to another bungalow. In July

1904, they burnt all the sheds of Khwairamban Bazar which housed the stalls of 3,000 women. In August 1904, they burnt the bungalow to which Mr Dunlop had shifted. This building was within a stone's throw of the British garrison and near the headquarters of the State Military Police.

The Political Agent faced all the difficulties of an alien rule. The people refused co-operation. The police therefore could not find the culprits out. The Political Agent offered a reward of Rs 500 to any one who could give the clue leading to the detection of the culprits of the second bungalow fire. This move miserably failed. Finding no other alternative, on the 12th September he ordered the people of Imphal to rebuild the second bungalow. This led to peaceful, non-violent agitation disobeying the Political Agent' order.

The Agitation of 1904, was led by 6 Rajkumars—Kala Sana, Magajing Singh, Matum Sana, Chamu Sana, Loitam Sana and Thangkokpa Sana They told the people of Imphal by word of mouth to disobey the order to rebuild the bungalow. According to the Political Agent, Maj Maxwell, the Rajkumars had all along been disloyal to the British Government. Groups of 30 or 40 men paraded the roads in all directions. On the 27th September, 300 or 400 men petitioned the Political Agent to find the offenders out instead of imposing the collective fine. He refused. The Political Agent's refusal intensified the Agitation. Many well-attended meetings were held at night.

On the 30th September, the Political Agent promulgated an order prohibiting assembly of 5 or more persons. In violation of this order, a meeting of about 3,000 men was held on 30 September near the Cheirap Court (District and Sessions Court of today). Three times the Political Agent ordered the meeting to disperse. Each time the meeting swelled in number. By 4 p m. it swelled to about 5,000 men. The Political Agent called it 'almost an open rebellion'

On getting the report that the meeting was peaceful and unarmed, the Chief Commissioner of Assam telegraphed to the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, that Maxwell's order to rebuild the bungalow would permanently alienate the Manipuris. Since the Manipuris paid taxes, his view was that the bungalow should be rebuilt from the public exchequer. The Viceroy apprised the Secretary of State of the situation telegraphically.

All bazars were boycotted from 29 September. Picketing went on at Moirangkhom Bazar. A large crowd gathered again on 3 October near the Cheirap Court. On 5 October, about 5,000 women requested the Political Agent to revoke his order. He refused. On the same day in the evening, the 6 Rajkumars and another leader Ngangba Lourungpuren, were arrested. The next day, the women of Imphal wished to see the Political Agent again. But they were cordoned off. With prior approval of the Government of India, the 6 Rajkumars were banished from Manipur. The people of Imphal did not rebuild the bungalow.

Effect of the Agitation

The Agitation opened the eyes of British statesman to the dangers of Maxwell's method of ruling Manipur. He relied on force too often. He said "Ruling a people like the Manipuris can only be undertaken with a strong force". He also wrote "With Manipuris, for most things force is the remedy". Soon after the Agitation he was succeeded by Col J. Shakespear with the policy of reconciliation. The Agitation, which anticipated Gandhiji by about a decade and a half, ended the era of rule by force and ushered in the era of rule by reconciliation.

Education of His Highness

The British educated His Highness. The main aim of his education was 'to make him a practical ruler contented with his position and surroundings and willing to spend his life in the management of his State'.

Achievements of Direct Administration

The Dimapur Road was open to cart traffic in February 1896. From this humble beginning it was destined to become an all-weather motorable road—the lifeline of Manipur—linking this State with the rest of the country. Other roads and bridges were greatly improved. A wooden bridge over the River Imphal at Singjamei Bazar was inaugurated in 1892. The Bazar was inaugurated in 1874 in Chandra Keerti's reign. In 1892, a wooden bridge was built over the Nambul at Keisampat and a road was built from Nityaipat to Sega Lambi. A suspension bridge over the River Irin at Saombung and a bridge over the Kongba stream at Kongba were built in 1895. The Chinga Hill was cut and a road was built through it in 1892. Mayai Lambi was repaired in 1897. Sanjenthong Bridge was built of concrete and steel in 1906 replacing the old bridge of Chandra Kreeti's time In 1905, sheds with posts of angle iron and roofed with corrugated iron were built for womens' stalls at Khwairamban Bazar

The site of the State Military Police (the 1st Battalion of Manipur Rifle of today) was occupied and developed in 1892. The buildings of Cheirap Court and the Town Court (better known as Sadar Panchayat) with two quarters for two court peons were completed in 1905 at a total cost of Rs 10,357 and annas 8 The Dak Bungalow was completed in the same year at a total cost of Rs 13,405.

Administration of justice was reformed. The Cheirap Court of old was reorganised and given the power of a First Class Magistrate. It had civil jurisdiction also. There were 5 members in it now. For minor criminal and civil cases in Imphal the Town Court was established with 5 members. For petty civil and criminal cases in the countryside, several Village Panchayats were established. For similar cases among Muslims, a Muslim Panchayat was established. Appeals from Panchayats lay to the Cheirap Court.

The Court of the Superintendent of the State had the powers of a Sessions Court but a sentence of imprisonment over 7 years was inoperative unless confirmed by the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Appeals from the Cheirap Court lay to the Court of the Superintendent of the State.

The Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam had the powers of a High Court in relation to Manipur. He could revise any order passed by any court in Manipur. The foundation for English education was firmly laid. Classes VII and VIII were opened in Johnstone School in 1905-6. There were 200 students in it in 1906-7. Mr Wince, the Head Master, taught all English classes.

In 1906-7, there were 52 *pathshalas* (lower primary schools). 48 were in the Valley and 4 were in the hills. A Sanskrit *tol* was established in this year. 8 text books in Bengali and 4 text books in English were translated into Manipuri in 1905 for teaching in schools.

Transfer of Administration

Administration of the State was transferred to His Highness and the Darbar on 15 May 1907. The Darbar consisted of His Highness as the President, a British I.C.S. officer lent from Eastern Bengal and Assam as the Vice President and 6 Manipuri members. At the time of the transfer of administration, Manipur had Rs 4·75 lakhs to its credit. The annual revenue was about Rs 4·20 lakhs and the annual expenditure was about Rs 4 lakhs.

The formal installation of His Highness was in February 1908. Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, came by motor car. In the ceremony, after making a speech, he conducted His Highness to the *gadi*. On His Highness's taking the seat, a military guard of honour presented arms and a salute of 11 guns was fired.

After the transfer, the Civil Police was under a member of the Darbar called the Police Member. The strength was 1 Sub-Inspector, 3 Head Constables, 1 Writer Constable and 19 constables. The Court of the Superintendent of the State ceased to exist. Its place was taken by the Darbar. All cases where a British subject was a party were tried by the Political Agent and where hillmen of Manipur were parties, they were tried by the Vice President.

The State Military Police (SMP) had the full sanctioned strength—7 Native Officers, 17 Non-commissioned Officers, 152 sepoys, 3 buglers and 1 drill instructor. They were armed with Tower Muskets (many of which were quite unserviceable) and a few rifles.

Progress

Manipur completed the payment of the war indemnity with great difficulty during the Direct Administration. Now the people were paying the Civil List and the annual tribute through the nose. Crippled by these two burdens, Manipur was limping on the path of progress. A summer residence of His Highness—a small bungalow with out-houses—was built in 1907-8 on a knoll at Kanchipur at a cost of Rs 2,077. The new palace in Imphal, built by the State Engineer Mr J.W. Pitchard, was occupied in November 1908. Two wings were added to Johnstone School in the same year.

6 new *pathsalas* were established in 1907-8 on a new footing in rural areas. In these *pathsalas*, a teacher's pay was Rs 3 per month. But they got sufficient paddy from the fathers/guardians of the pupils. A new *madrasa* was established at Lilong in the same year.

Statistics on education in 1907-8—the year of the transfer of the management of the State—are interesting. There were altogether 97 lower primary school teachers. Out of them, 72 were Manipuri Hindus born in the State, 19 were Manipuri Hindus born outside the State, 3 were Manipuri

Muslims and 3 were foreigners. 175 candidates appeared in the lower primary examination. 144 passed—58 in the First Division, 45 in the Second Division and 41 in the Third Division. Mr W.A. Cosgrave, Vice President of the Darbar, observes with satisfaction "It is interesting to note that one Manipuri girl and two Nagas who appeared in the lower primary examination were all successful". From these modest beginnings Manipur made great strides.

Titles for His Highness

When the Great War broke out in Europe, His Highness placed his services and the resources of the State at the disposal of the King Emperor for the war effort. On 4 December 1917, His Highness was made a C B E. in recognition of his services in connection with the War On the 1st January 1918, he was promoted to the hereditary title of the Maharajah. The Viceroy and the Governor-General, Lord Chelmsford, issued a *sanad* dated 1 January 1918. It reads : "I hereby confer upon Your Highness the title of Maharaja as an hereditary distinction for your services in connection with her War". Later, on the 1st January 1934, His Highness the Maharajah was made a Knight Commander of the Star of India (K.C S.I.).

More development works

Mr J.C. Higgins came as the Vice President of the Darbar (1910-1916) (The Rules for the Management of the State of Manipur was amended in 1916. Under the amended Rules, the British officer lent by the Government of India became the President of the Darbar and resolutions of the Darbar were sent to His Highness for approval.) Mr Higgins became the President of the Darbar (1916-17).

The newly built temple of Govindajee in the new palace compound was inaugurated in November 1910. It mollified the feelings of the Hindu population injured during the Direct Administration. An early British administrator in

that period, to realise a part of the war indemnity, removed slabs of marble from the temple of Govindajee desecrated during the Manipur War and put them to auction. Later, there was a daring burglary in the temple as we have seen and the people had no one to turn to for redress. The water for the daily worship was brought from Ningthem Pukhri by a pipeline. The pump was worked by wind power and was ordered from England in 1904.

An acetylene gas installation at the palace was completed in 1908-9 at a cost of Rs 6,221. It gave 76 lights at the palace and 20 street lamps.

After a bad cholera epidemic in 1908, His Highness and the Darbar approved a scheme of water works for supply of filtered water and the Government of India gave in 1910 a loan of Rs 2 lakhs rep ayable in 10 years with an interest of 4 p.c. per annum. James Simpson & Co undertook the work. His Highness inaugurated the supply of filtered water in 1913 about the 30th June. The Government of India approved a hydro-electric scheme, not exceeding Rs 1,10,500, sent by the Darbar through the Governor of Assam. The hydro-electric installation was commissioned on 25 October 1930.

More and more roads were metalled, new bridges were built and old ones improved. Treatment of diseases and attempts to control epidemics began on scientific lines. The State Engineers and the Civil surgeons were invariably Englishmen. Their efforts to improve the little State with the meagre resources placed at their disposal are admirable.

Johnstone High School was one of the best high schools under Calcutta University. The Political Agent was the *ex-officio* secretary. It got a grant of Rs 50 p.m. from the Government of India for 5 years and a grant of another Rs 50 p.m. from the Government of Assam. In 1930 there was a purely private High School, called the New High School, in Imphal. Later it became the Churachand High

School. A private girls' M.E. School functioned at Kangabam Leikai. It was the forerunner of the Tamphasana Girl High School (estd. 1935). Your High School (renamed Tombisana High School) and Ramlal Paul High School were started in 1933 by the public. The Bengali High School was an M.E. School in 1930. It was established in 1904 by Maj Maxwell. Bhairodan Hindi School functioned in the British Reserve.

Upto 1931, there was no centre for Matriculation Examination in Manipur. Candidates appeared at Gauhati.

Flood and famine

In October 1916, a severe flood gripped the Valley. It was the worst flood since 1775. The sacred image of Govindajee was removed to Yaiskul. His Highness and members of his family too evacuated to it.

In 1920, a severe famine—the worst since the Seven Years' Devastation—ravaged Manipur for about 6 months. There were a few starvation deaths in Thoubal area. Petitions of villagers for loans flooded His Highness's office and the Political Agent's office. Paddy sold at Rs 7 per *sangbai* one morning in Thawan (about August) and then at Rs 6 annas 8 per *sangbai*.

Condition of Manipur

The condition of Manipur in the period upto about 1940 may be briefly noticed. The increasing population was pressing on the land. Some lakes and fens had become habitable land owing to silting. Still, geese (*Anser anser*), Baikal teals and gadwalls used to visit the lakes of Manipur in large flocks. Brahminy ducks (Sanskrit *chakravaka*) used to visit the River Imphal in small flocks near Phougagchau. Martins still built their mud nests in dwelling houses of the Manipuris.

Civets and wolves had disappeared from Imphal ; but jackals were there. The Darbar was concerned about the danger to the fauna. So from 1912, it prohibited by law the killing of

egrets (Manipuri *urok*). From 1926 it prohibited the catching of wild geese or ducks by netting. Peacocks had disappeared from Manipur sometime in the 19th century.

High State officials in 1918

In 1918, the high officials of the State who carried on the Administration were 1. Sir R.H. Henderson President of the Darbar 2. Rajkumar Dumbra Singh Senapati Ordinary Member of the Darbar 3. Nongmaithem Tomchouba Singh Ordinary Member of the Darbar 4 Nongmaithem Nene Singh Ordinary Member of the Darbar 5. Rajkumar Thangkokpa Singh Additional Member of the Darbar 6. Sougaijam Bhuban Singh Additional Member of the Darbar 7. Maibam Samden Singh Additional Member of the Darbar 8. Mr C.F. Jeffery State Engineer 9. Angom Tomchouba Singh President Cheirap Court 10. Rajkumar Digendra Singh Member Cheirap Court 11. Chingakham Jhanjajit Singh Member Cheirap Court 12. Chandramukha Singh Pukhramba Member Cheirap Court 13. Ningthoujam Kulachandra Singh Member Cheirap Court 14. Rajkumar Nirod Shahi Singh Member Cheirap Court 15. Thabal Sharma Member Cheirap Court 16. Gagan Chandra Aditya Officer in charge Land Revenue Office 17. Upendra Krishna Chakravarty Revenue Officer 18. Haobam Pitambar Singh Subadar Major Military Police 19. Chandam Gulap Singh Deputy Inspector of Schools.

The Kuki Rebellion

When the Great War broke out, all sections of the Indian people including the Indian Princes came forward to help Britain in her hour of need. Manipur, besides contributing money to the war fund and Rs 1,38,000 to the War Loan, sent a labour force of 2,000 hillmen, called Labour Corps in those days, for working in France. When attempts were made to raise a second Labour Corps of hillmen, the Kukis refused to go and rebelled.

The rebellion broke out on 9 Poinu (19 December) 1917 when the Kukis looted the forest toll station at Ithai. The

first Labour Corps of 2,000 hillmen led by 30 *lambus* (interpreters cum leaders) arrived safe and sound from France on 17 Inga (about 28 June) 1918 Chingakham Sanajaoba, a Manipuri Hindu who claimed supernatural powers and urged the Kukis to rebel, was arrested in Burma in August 1918. After the Great War ended, the rebellion was put down without much fighting.

The attempt to raise a second labour corps was the immediate cause of the rebellion. The Kukis were subjects of Manipur. During the rebellion, they attacked some other hill peoples subjects of Manipur. The Vice President and later on the President of the Manipur State Darbar, who was a British officer in charge of the administration of the hill areas, could not do the work well on account of inexperience, want of adequate staff, bad means of communication and want of sufficient funds. The rules framed by the British for the administration of Manipur did not make adequate provision for administration of hill areas. This was the root cause of this rebellion against the State of Manipur.

The Administrative Reform, 1919

With the outbreak of the Great War, the British Empire was past its zenith. After the War, the Government of India Act 1919 came into force in British India. For Indian India, the Chamber of Princes also called Narendra Mandal was established by a Proclamation of George V the King Emperor.* This was the beginning of the end of the British policy of political isolation of Indian States. Manipur, an 11-gun State, became a member of the Chamber of Princes in its own right.

*The Royal Proclamation of 23 December 1919 says "Simultaneously with the new constitutions in British India I have gladly assented to the establishment of a Chamber of Princes."

For internal administration, the Rules for the Management of the State of Manipur, 1919 framed by the Government of Assam was approved by the Government of India in October, 1919. In judiciary, the British now conceded more power to the State. A sentence of imprisonment for 5 years or more passed by the Durbar became operative if confirmed by the Maharajah—a function formerly exercised by the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam or the Chief Commissioner of Assam as the case might be. But a sentence of death passed by the Durbar still required confirmation by the Governor of Assam to be operative. In civil cases the Maharajah now had the power of revision formerly held by the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam. But a copy of his order had to be sent to the Political Agent, who could refer any matter to the Governor.

The Maharajah as the person responsible for the administration of the State could veto any resolution of the Durbar. But a copy of the order had to be sent to the Political Agent. Under the new Rules, the hills were now administered by the President of the Manipur State Durbar on behalf of His Highness the Maharajah The President of the Manipur State Durbar was assisted in this matter by two S D Os.—all officers of the Manipur State. The money for the administration of the hill areas was controlled by the Durbar. The Maharajah was consulted on all important matters regarding the administration of the hill areas and the Political Agent, in consultation with the President, gave effect to the wishes of the Maharajah so far as they were consistent with the orders of the Governor. Less than 30 years were now left for the British Empire to collapse. Efforts of the British to hold the hills of Manipur may be seen in this light.

To help the State implement the reforms, Government reduced the annual tribute of Manipur to Rs 5,000 for a period of 10 years from 1920 and waived the State's annual

contribution of Rs 30,000 to the maintenance of the Imphal-Mao Road on condition that the amounts thus saved should be used for the development of the hill areas. Thus the north-western hill areas were constituted into Tamenglong Sub-division, the south-western hill areas into Churachandpur Sub-division and the north-eastern hill areas into Ukhrul Sub-division The rest of the hills were kept direct under the President of the Manipur State Durbar

The Political Agent was in the picture as the agent to the Governor. It was not therefore necessary to define his function in hill administration.

Agitation in the north-west

The Sub-divisions constituted in 1919 were abolished in January 1930. The whole of the hill areas was once more placed direct under the President of the Manipur State Durbar. He was now assisted by two Sub-divisional Officers who sat in Imphal and not at hill headquarters.

In the north-western hills, a movement started among the Kabuis. In 1931 the Political Agent, Mr J. C. Higgins, took action against the new movement. Its leaders were arrested outside Manipur ; but, as they were subjects of Manipur, they were handed over to the Manipur authorities. They were tried and convicted by courts in Manipur.

The administration of the hill areas was re-organised in 1933. With effect from the 1st May 1933, they were constituted into 3 Sub-divisions—Sadar, Tamenglong and Ukhrul. Within about 6 years, the Second World War broke out and shortly after the end of the War, British Paramouncy over Manipur lapsed. So the re-organisation of May 1933 remained in force till the dawn of Independence.

Hill policy : Remarks

The British were unfair to His Highness and the Durbar. Had the British reposed a little more trust in His Highness and the Durbar, many innocent lives would be saved and

there would be more roads, bridle-paths, schools and dispensaries in the hills. The British spent the 56 years of their Paramouncy in experiment.

Advancement in art and culture

The time of Churachand saw great advancement in art and culture. Nata Sankirtan reached a very high degree of development. Manohar Shahi *kirtan* grew in excellence and popularity. Dhop reached a new grandeur. Nata Rasa formulated in Chandra Keerti's reign blossomed sweetly. In *pung*, all the four forms of *dhumel*—Maha Dhumel, Gour Dhumel, Nityai Dhumel and Lairemma Dhumel—shone in their majestic glory. Pung Cholom free from acrobatics impressed the audience with artistry. This was also the time when Hindustani classical music was introduced.

The theatre arrived with Bengali officers following the British Conquest. Dramatic performances were in Bengali in the opening years of the 20th century. Soon the Manipuris switched over to Manipuri. Plays like *Ram Lila* and *Sabha Parva* were staged in Manipuri during Saraswati Puja, Durga Puja or on happy occasions. The Manipur Dramatic Union was established in 1931. It has been regularly staging Manipuri plays since then. The Aryan Theatre was established in 1935, and the Society Theatre, in 1937.

Khwairakpam Chaoba and Lamabam Kamal appeared in the field of literature. Their poems inspired the people and charmed them with their love of nature, and the melody of their music. Khwairakpam Chaoba's historical novel *Lavanga Lata* and Lamabam Kamal's novel *Madhavi* were written in this period. Manipuri Sahitya Parishad was established in 1935.

In oral literature, the story of Khamba and Thoibi sung to the accompaniment of a bow instrument, *pena*, was further developed. New minor characters were created and some new metaphors and similes employed. A new genre

of music, Khongjom Parva, sang of Manipur's epic struggle against the British in the Manipur War. Later, episodes from the Mahabharat and the history of Manipur also came to be sung in the new genre.

Poet Rabindranath Tagore introduced Manipuri Dance at Shantiniketan as a subject. This led to the recognition of Manipuri Dance as one of the four classical dances of India.

Intermittent agitation

We have traced the freedom struggle upto 1904. After the transfer of Administration to His Highness and the Durbar, the people agitated for abolition of *pothang* (forcing the people to carry touring officials' luggage without remuneration), *yarek santri* (forcing the people to guard without remuneration touring officials at night) and annual lease of ferries by auction and reduction of the water-rate.

The revenues of the State in the early years of British Paramouncy were meagre. The Administration had to resort to these measures to balance the budget and save something for the Reserve Fund every year. But there was also much extravagant expenditure from the public exchequer in maintaining the so-called dignity of the relatives of His Highness. As a result of the agitations, the above grievances of the people were removed by raising the land revenue and by reducing needless expenditure. But the need of a political party to ventilate the grievances of the people was now felt.

Swadeshi and Hindi

The agitations of Gandhiji had a tremendous effect on the people of the Valley inspite of British attempts at political isolation of Indian States. News papers of Calcutta, specially the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, brought the news of the upsurge for India's independence. The people carried out in their own small way the programme of *swadeshi* movement, specially in propagation of *khadi*. Propagation of Hindi

became a patriotic duty. So did smoking *bidis* instead of cigarettes.

Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha

Manipur was not yet ripe for a full-fledged political party, however much leading citizens felt its need. So they requested the Maharajah to form a cultural organisation to look after the needs of all Manipuri Hindus of Manipur, Assam, Bengal, Tripura and Burma which was at that time a province of India. His Highness agreed. The organisation was to be named Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha.

The organisation was formed on 30 May 1934. The first plenary session was held at the palace. Delegates from all the above provinces and Indian States attended. His Highness in the formal dress of a Prince presided. A salute of 11 guns was fired. The first session was far from a freedom struggle. The British Government was profusely praised for their 'kindness' in placing the Maharajah on the *gaddi* The majority of the delegates were State servants and they also ruled the roost. His Highness in his presidential address urged the people to work unitedly to please 'the mighty British Government'.

And yet, in the opening song and the closing song, both written by Sarokhaibam Lalit Singh, there are a few words and lines that foreshadowed the coming struggle. In the opening song, Manipur was referred to as dependent. It also asks us to look to Japan and other countries outside India which are 'all steeped in nationalism and consequently ascending the steps of advancement'. A Sanskrit sentence "*Vande manipur mataram*" (I bow down to mother Manipur) forms the refrain of the closing song. From what quarter the inspiration came is crystal clear.

The second plenary session of the Mahasabha was held at Silchar in 1936. The session is memorable because of a very important guide-line from His Highness the Maharajah.

In his presidential address, His Highness said "I do not like to call the Manipuris living outside Manipur *videshi* Manipuri (foreigner Manipuri) or *pravasi* Manipuri (Manipuris staying outside their country). We are all Indians. Manipur is a part of India". Indians other than Manipuris coming from other parts of India and settling in Manipur were called 'foreigners' in the terminology of the Manipur Administration. They had to pay a tax called Foreigner's Tax. If they wished to visit Manipur, they had to take permission from the Durbar. It is strange and yet true that Gandhiji and, on another occasion, Rabindranath Tagore were not allowed to visit Manipur.

Indian States were as much parts of India as British Indian provinces His Highness was speaking a truth. Only it was at variance with practice of the Manipur Administration. We may also remember that the Government of India Act, 1935 contemplated a Federation of British Indian provinces and the Indian States. His Highness had already agreed to federate Manipur with British Indian provinces.

The third plenary session was held in Mandalay in Burma in February-March 1937. The fourth plenary session was in Imphal at Chinga. It was a crucial session. It dropped 'Hindu' from its name and became a political party under the name Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha. It adopted for the first time a number of political resolutions. The Manipur Administration now debarred State servants from being its member. There was a mass exodus of State servants from the Mahasabha. There remained but Hijam Irabot Singh and Elangbam Tompok Singh.

Sports and amusement

Hockey, football, lawn tennis, volley ball and badminton were introduced during British Paramouncy. They became popular. There were regular tournaments of football and hockey in the cold season at the playground of the State

Military Police. Teams from the hills and the Valley participated. The area of the State Military Police was not a prohibited place. The public had open access to it. A sports association called the Town Club used to participate in tournaments outside the State

The talkie was introduced in 1936. A talkie cinema was established at Sadar Bazar in that year under the name Manipur Talkie House Students boycotted it in the early months of its introduction thinking that it would drain away money from the State. The radio made its debut by 1937. But by that time there were only 3 or 4 radio-sets in Imphal. The radio was considered a luxury then The production of hydro-electricity in the State at that time was also low. It was about 156 kilowatts only. Most homes in Imphal did without electricity. This was another factor.

Public health in Churachand's time

A smallpox epidemic broke out in February 1919. A wife of His Highness's cousin was among the victims. The Administration resorted to mass vaccination and quarantine. It became the last epidemic of small pox There was a cholera epidemic in 1935 It promised to become as bad as that of 1924 The quality of filtered water from the waterworks was very good and the supply was very regular although it served only the urban area. It was of great help in controlling the disease. There was mass inoculation in rural and urban areas The public was more enlightened than in 1924. The epidemic became the last cholera epidemic.

After 1935, tuberculosis took the place of cholera as the most dreaded disease. Ventilation in most Manipuri homes was bad. Windows were not many and mostly remained shut. Direct sunlight or even diffused sunlight was insufficient inside the dwelling-house. Most roads were dusty. Men and women worked hard to make both ends meet but the diet of the poorer section was poor. Streptomycin was not yet

discovered. Nor even pennicillin. The Hindus empirically used *tulasi* leaves, which have an active principle active against tuberculosis bacilli.

Typhoid was another killer. People used unsafe water. Unhygienic curd was another source. Chloromycetin was not yet discovered. Sulpha drugs were the best medicines. An epidemic of rabies raged among dogs in July 1912. The infection probably came from jackals. A number of men bitten by rabid dogs died. The only hope in the situation was that the number of dogs was small. Most Hindus did not keep it. Incidence of calculi was high among the Manipuris. Calculi were removed in the Civil Hospital by operation. The real remedy viz. avoiding them by dietetics was still a thing of the future.

Raghunath Marwari donated Rs 5,600 for construction of the operation room in the Civil Hospital. In 1937, Bhairodan Mahta donated an X-ray apparatus to the Civil Hospital and removed a long felt want in the State.

Calamities and mishaps

In 1931, about 16 April, some men tried to light up an unused petrol lamp in a shop at Singjamei Bazar. The lamp burst and the shop was burnt to the ground. Three men, all named Yaima, died in the fire. There was no fire-brigade in the State then. On 4 May 1939 an unusually strong windstorm swept the Valley at night. A two-storied building on the road-side at Kangabam Leikai collapsed under the wind load killing 2 market women who took shelter under it. Many others were trapped in the debris. His Highness and the President of the Durbar came to the spot and rescued the entrapped people.

The introduction of the motor car and the bicycle brought road accidents also. The first road accident occurred in June 1903. A Manipuri woman (of Waikhom family) while returning from the bazar with her child was killed by a motor car

of an Englishman. In April 1915, an old woman was knocked down by a bicycle at Thangmeiband, Lilasing Khongnang-khong. She succumbed to her injuries. The second motor accident was in December 1926 when a woman (of Thangjam family) was killed by a lorry at Mantri Pukhri. The driver was punished with 3 years' imprisonment. The third motor accident also was near Mantri Pukhri. A maiden (of Thoudam family) was outright run over by a lorry in March 1930.

Harnessing electricity by taming a hill-stream brought immense benefit but it brought also electrocution. The first case of electrocution was in November 1933 when a Brahmin boy happened to hold the iron rope of a badly insulated electric pole at Kabo Leikai.

Demand for Responsible Government

1938 and 1939 were years of great awakening in Indian States all over India. Manipur was no exception. In November 1938, a petition signed by 356 leading citizens of the State was submitted to His Highness requesting him to set up a Legislative Council and to nominate the members of the Durbar from amongst the Councillors. This was clearly beyond the power of the Maharajah. In November 1939, the Mahasabha submitted a petition to His Highness to set up a unicameral legislature of 100 members—80 to be elected and 20 to be nominated by him. The petition also contemplated vote by ballot, joint electorate, payment of tax or literacy or both as the criterion of suffrage, formation of ministry by the leader of the party commanding majority in the legislature and limiting the Civil List to a fixed ratio of the revenues.

The Great Agitation, 1939-40

The Indian National Congress did not function direct in Indian States for reasons of strategy. At first the Congress did not favour agitation by the people of Indian States. To serve the cause of India's freedom best, they were to

concentrate on Constructive Programme such as propagation of *khadi* and other village industries and the spread of Hindi. But in view of the growing political consciousness in the States, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel requested Gandhiji to allow the people of the States also to agitate. Gandhiji agreed. The Congress now allowed the people of the States to agitate provided (i) the name of the Congress was not directly used in the agitations (ii) the agitations were on local issues and (iii) the support of the Congress was limited to moral support.

The rice harvest of Manipur in 1939 was poor. At this time, there were some 14 rice-mills in the State. Marwaris and some Manipuris purchased all the paddy they could, milled it and exported it to British India. In the harvesting season, the price of rice soared to Re 1/- per *sangbai*—an alarming sky-rocketing price in the circumstances of those days. On 11 December, agitators requested a rich Manipuri mill-owner on the bank of the Nambul to stop milling. He agreed, if it was for the good of the country. On 12 December, hundreds of women demonstrated before the State Office to request the Durbar to ban export of rice and shut down rice mills. The President of the Durbar, Mr T.A. Sharpe, said that such an order would require the approval of the Maharajah who was then at Nabadwip. He went with the women to the telegraph office in the British Reserve and telegraphed to His Highness. The demonstrators remained there waiting for definite orders from His Highness. The demonstrators swelled to a few thousands. The Political Agent, Mr C. Gimson, was on tour. Some sepoys of the 4th Assam Rifles cleared the demonstrators. Some women received some bayonet injuries in the process.

On receiving a reply from His Highness, the Durbar immediately banned export of rice from 13 December. Women agitators led by Tongou Devi turned their attention to stopping rice mills in the British Reserve and the State territory. Khwairamban Bazar and Police Bazar were boycotted. The

more radical among members of the Mahasabha left it and formed a new political party, called the Praja Sanmelani, on 7 January 1940 in a big public meeting at Police Bazar. Two days later Hijam Irabot Singh the president of the new party was arrested for his speech delivered on the 7th January. The party continued its agitation under the leadership of Elangbam Tompok Singh. Its agitation was on Congress lines disobeying forest laws, fishery laws and revenue laws.

The agitation spread to the countryside and got the backing of men and women there. In the meantime, women leaders picketed shops in the British Reserve ; and Police Bazar in the State territory was deserted forever.

Nature of the Great Agitation

The Great Agitation was a Congress-inspired agitation for constitutional reforms. The people wanted Responsible Government. The demand for banning export of rice was only the tip of the ice berg. It was used merely as a starting point. Hence the unabated agitation after the export of rice was banned and all rice mills were closed. The President of the Durbar hit it when he said that the agitation was on Congress lines[1]. Men agitators carried on the struggle with *Vande Mataram* on their lips. Congressmen in Assam helped the agitation with advice. The then Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Reid, said that Congress elements in Assam 'fomented' the agitation[2]. Except for the use of the word 'foment', the assessment is right. A brief report was given to Gandhiji in Calcutta.

The agitation was carried on both in the British Reserve—an enclave of British India covering 1·83 sq. mile—and the State territory. It was against the British and the Manipur Administration. It kept the Maharajah, the Political Agent, the Durbar, the Agency Police and the Civil Police of the State on their toe for months together.

1. Administration Report of the Manipur State 1940-41 p. 3
2. Sir Robert Reid : HFAA p. 91

In 1938 and 1939, there were agitations in the more politically conscious States throughout India. The agitations in Travancore, Saurashtra, Manipur and the other Indian States were State people's contribution to the nation's struggle for Purna Swaraj

Effect of the Great Agitation

From before the Great Agitation, Government asked the States to effect administrative reforms. This was to forestall agitations in States ; for Government knew that Congress elements there would agitate following the change of Congress policy in 1938. When the Great Agitation subsided, Government pressed Manipur Administration for reforms

The following reforms resulted from the Great Agitation : (1) Establishment of the Chief Court ending the function of the Durbar as a court (2) Limiting the Civil List to 10% of the revenue, a much needed reform desired by the people (and the Secretary of State) to release funds for development of the State (3) Establishment of Appointments Board for appointments to posts after public examination (before this, the Maharajah had the power to make appointments to all posts drawing a salary of Rs 15 or more per month) (4) Establishment of more police stations.

The hated *mangba sengba* (excommunication and purification) also nearly disappeared to the delight of the people.

The hated *mangba* (excommunication) and *sengba* (purification), against which all right-thinking men valiantly fought, had become a drawback of Churachand's time.

Sir Churachand's death

The Maharajah did not survive long the Great Agitation. The reforms resulting from it were implemented in July 1941. In September, His Highness expressed his intention to abdicate. Before this could be arranged, he died in November 1941 at Nabadwip.

BODHA CHANDRA SINGH

Bodha Chandra Singh succeeded his father Sir Churachand. Soon after his accession, Manipur became a principal theatre of the Second World War.

The course of the War

Japanese planes bombed Imphal on Sunday 10 May 1942. Inhabitants fled to villages. The Administration ceased to function for a few weeks. There was an air-raid on Imphal again on the 16th. Towards the end of May, offices of the State began to function at Kwakeithel at the house of the Inspector of Police. Johnstone High School was run at Khagempalli at the house of the Head Master. There was a lull on the Manipur front for about a year.

On 20 and 21 April 1943, Imphal was bombed again. This time there was no panic. The Matriculation examination of the Calcutta University at Imphal Centre went on uninterrupted at Moirangkhom at the house of the Jail Member of the Durbar. Eight candidates appeared. The air-raid of the 20th April took place when they were writing their answer. They took shelter in a good trench and immediately after the all-clear, they resumed writing their answer. But a *mandap* (prayer hall) was hit at Khurai killing many people. The air-raid of the 21st was immediately before the commencement of the examination. Soon after the all-clear, the examination started. After this there was a lull for about one year again.

On 16 and 17 March 1944, there were air-raids on Imphal. After a week or so, Japanese Divisions penetrated upto Sawombung (about 7 miles north-east of Imphal) through Ukhrul. Other Japanese Divisions pushed up the Indo-Burma Road and the Tiddim Road and reached the Valley. A Japanese Division cut the Imphal-Dimapur Road on 29 March 1944 and the siege of Imphal began.

The Indian National Army came with Japanese forces. The Japanese advanced upto about Logpaching (about 11

miles south-west of Imphal). On 21 March 1944, General Tojo stated in the Diet that the administration of Indian territories occupied by Japan would be carried on by the Provisional Government of India of Subhas Chandra Bose. Accordingly, the area around Moirang and the Andaman Nicobar Islands were in the hands of the Provisional Government of India.

The Allied Powers had supremacy in the air They moved in the 5th Indian Division, complete with equipment, from Arakan by air and strengthened the defence of Imphal, which soon became the Stalingrad of the East Some of the fiercest battles of the Second World War were fought near Imphal. The severe fighting in Bishnupur and Palel areas was in the second half of April. By the first week of May. the Japanese began to lose ground.

In June, after the relief of Kohima, the 2nd Indian Division moved down the Imphal-Dimapur Road to raise the siege of Imphal. The 5th Indian Division too pushed up the Dimapur Road. The two Divisions met at the 109th milestone from Dimapur on 22 June 1944. The siege of Imphal was raised. Soon, the Japanese were completely repulsed from Manipur. The Indian National Army retreated with the Japanese forces. Unchallenged supremacy in the air was the main factor of Allied victory.

Remission of tribute

In recognition of the services of the Maharajah and the people of Manipur, George VI, the King Emperor, remitted in perpetuity the annual tribute of Rs 50,000 payable by the Maharajah to the British Government. This was in 1945.

Lapse of Paramouncy

By virtue of section 7 (1) (b) of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 British Paramouncy over Indian States lapsed on 15 August 1947 The Act also partitioned the territory of British India into two and set up two independent sovereign Dominions called the Dominion of India and the Dominion

of Pakistan. The overwhelming majority of Indian States including Manipur acceded to the Dominion of India by signing the Instrument of Accession before the lapse of Paramouncy. In International Law therefore the acceding States became a part and parcel of the Dominion of India from the moment it was born. The Political Agent became the Dominion Agent from 15 August 1947.

Status before Independence

The status of Manipur immediately before the attainment of Independence was very low. Manipur was given only a very limited authority. The Governor of Assam exercised very important functions in the administration of Manipur. Neither the Durbar nor the Maharajah had the power to create posts Thus if a temporary clerk drawing, say Rs 10/- p. m., was required, the Durbar had to send through the Political Agent, a proposal to the Governor for creation of the post The Governor sanctioned or did not sanction the creation of the post in his discretion If withdrawal of money from the Reserve Fund was required for a lawful purpose, say for instance development of hydroelectricity, it was the Governor who could sanction it. No one in Manipur had the power to write off bad debts for instance unrealisable land revenue. The Governor wrote it off on the recommendation of the Durbar.

The Governor exercised these powers upto the last moment of Paramouncy. The Political Agent forwarded, on 2 August 1947, a proposal of the Durbar to the Governor for withdrawal of Rs 24,000 from the Reserve Fund for development of hydroelectric power. The Governor approved the withdrawal and his secretary sent the reply to the 'Political Agent' on 22 August. But when the letter reached Manipur, there was no Political Agent to receive it It was delivered to the Dominion Agent. He was to forward the reply to the President of the Manipur State Durbar. But there was no Durbar either. So the Governor's approval was sent to the Chief Minister.

The Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947

Manipur acceded to the Dominion of India in External Affairs, Defence and Communication like other Indian States. For the governance of Manipur, the Maharajah promulgated the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947. The Act provided adult franchise, joint electorate and some fundamental rights. But these were more clearly provided in the Constitution of India which was then in the process of drafting. On the whole, the Constitution Act was a dangerous anachronism. The people had been demanding Responsible Government since 1939. What the Constitution Act gave was less than a shadow of a mighty name. The Assembly was to tender advice to the Council of Ministers (sec. 18). The Council of Ministers might not accept the advice (sec. 22). The Council of Ministers was responsible to the Maharajah (sec 12). Even if the Assembly passed a vote of no confidence, against a minister, the Maharajah might retain him on the Council of Ministers (sec. 21) The Maharajah might not accept the advice of the Council of Ministers (sec. 10 b). The Chief Minister could be appointed from outside the Assembly (sec. 10 sub clause e). Neither the Maharajah nor the Maharanee was answerable at Law or subject to any legal proceeding in the State Courts (sec. 8 sub clause b). The Assembly could not initiate amendment of the constitution. The Maharajah in Council was to place the proposed amendment before the Assembly and if it was to be passed, it required the vote of at least 80% of the members present and voting (sec. 56).

These were some of the provisions so contrary to Parlia mentary Democracy. They had to be removed urgently before they worked havoc. Drastic steps were called for to remove grave defects. A section of the people agitated for the removal of the Maharajah.

Merger with the Centre

Most Indian States including Manipur were non-viable. But the benefits of *swaraj* were meant for the people of the

States also. For the welfare and advancement of the people of Indian States and also to end balkanisation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel effected integration. Some 216 Indian States merged into the neighbouring Provinces. Some 275 Indian States merged in 5 Unions of States. Merger began on 1 January 1948 with the merger of Orissa and Chattisgarh States into Orissa and ended on 1 January 1950 with the merger of Coch Behar into West Bengal. Manipur merged with the Centre on 15 October 1949. About 61 Indian States were benefitted by this last form of merger.

After merger

Manipur became a centrally administered State. It was called a Part C State when the Constitution came into force. The States of India were re organised in 1956. Hyderabad lost its separate entity Manipur, because of its culture particularly its rich Old and Medieval literature and also because of the sympathetic care of Jawaharlal Nehru and Govind Ballav Pant, remained as a separate entity. But it suffered a temporary reduction in status. It became a Union Territory. All political parties agitated for regaining statehood On 21 January 1972, Manipur became a full fledged State again, thus taking its rightful place in the great Indian polity. But one aspiration remained unfulfilled for some time. In 1972 the Sahitya Akademi recognised Manipuri as one of the national languages for the purpose of literature. On the political plane, however, it was not in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India. This aspiration also was recently fulfilled. The Parliament passed the necessary bill to amend the Eighth Schedule by including Manipuri, Konkani and Nepali in it.

This is where we stand today. What lies beyond is still in the womb of Future.

GLOSSARY

Angoms, the. One of the 7 leading clans that peopled the Manipur Valley in ancient times. Once powerful. They had a principality of their own—the Angom Principality (q.v.).

Angom Principality, the. It lay to the east of River Imphal. Once independent ; later absorbed in the Ningthouja kingdom (q. v.).

Bamon Khunthok. A useful book. Deals with immigration of Manipuri Brahmins. Gives place of origin, original surname, original *ishta devata* of the immigrant and the reign in which immigration took place.

Kabaw Valley. Dependency of Manipur from 1470 to 1834. Now in Burma

Khumans, the. One of the 7 leading clans of ancient Manipur. Once powerful. Their principality was the Khuman Principality (q. v.).

Khuman Principality, the. Lay in the south-eastern part of the Valley. Once independent ; absorbed in the Ningthouja kingdom by the end of the 12th century. Capital—Thoubal at first ; shifted to Mayang Imphal later.

Luwangs, the. One of the 7 ancient clans like the Angoms and the Khumans. Their principality was the Luwang Principality (q. v.)

Luwang Principality, the One of the earliest principalities to be absorbed in the Ningthouja Kingdom (q v.). Lay on the far side of Lamphel, which was a deep lake.

Ningthoujas, the. Descendants of Pakhangba (A.D.33-?) Also called the Miteis/Meiteis. Their principality—the **Ningthouja Principality**—was during the Heptarchy just one of the seven independent principalities. It absorbed other principalities one by one and became the **Ningthouja kingdom**. Original capital, Kangla (at present cantonment of Assam Rifles)

Ningthourol Lambuba. A good chronicle. Has three defects : Sentences cumbrous ; style prolix ; events recorded reign-wise only, without dates.

Royal Chronicle. A most reliable chronicle of the Manipuris from A. D. 33 to 1891.

Index